Bailey, William Frederick

The Slavs of the war zone

AVS OF THE WAR ZONE

W. F. BAILEY, C.B.

Bailey, William
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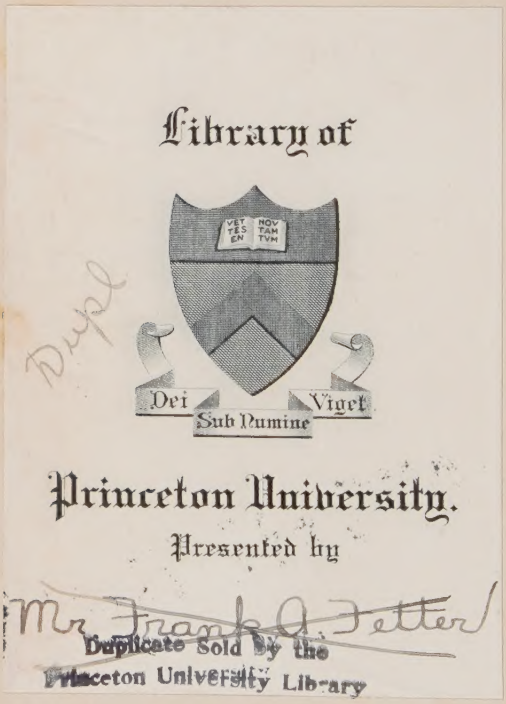
The Slavs of the war
zone



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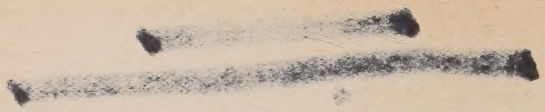

THE SLAVS OF THE WAR ZONE

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Croatian Women spinning and knitting.

[*Frontispiece.*

THE SLAVS OF THE WAR ZONE

BY
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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

It is not my intention in these pages to discuss, except incidentally, the history and political problems of the Slav peoples who dwell where the great European War now rages. These subjects have been adequately dealt with by many well-known and well-equipped writers such as Mr. Seton-Watson, Mr. H. Wickham Steed and Professor Alison Phillips. My desire is to give a vivid and accurate account of the countries in which these Slav races dwell—to give a description of their habits and customs; of how they live at home, among their neighbours, and in their market-places; of their dress, their amusements and their festivals; of their music, their songs and their dances; of their views of life, their joys and their sorrows; of their political, national and religious aspirations; of how the great war found them and how it leaves them—these people that Fate has made to be the shuttle-cocks of Empires. This is not a war book. It is an account of these Slav peoples as they were living when the war came on them like a blast from a burning fiery furnace, and how they fared in its awful presence. It is to be hoped that these pages may have some permanent value in enabling readers to envisage, to appreciate, to understand peoples perhaps little known outside their own boundaries, yet who have been the proximate cause of the most tremendous upheaval that has taken place since mankind had a history. In the days of settlement after the war, these races will demand recognition. They who gave a name to depressed peoples all the world over will not be for ever the slaves of circumstance. When the war ends those who are seated round the conference table at which the futures of so many nations and peoples and kingdoms will be determined, cannot

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close their minds to the desires, the needs, and the demands of these Slav peoples seeking recognition.

I would express my indebtedness for the help given in the preparation of this book by my friend Miss Jean V. Bates, who has lived amongst the people here described, who knows them intimately, and who has made it possible to give an account of their lives and fortunes down to the present day.

I have also to thank the Editors of the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Nineteenth Century and After*, and the *Edinburgh Review*, for their kind permission to make use of certain articles contributed by me recently to these periodicals.

The illustrations are from photographs placed at my disposal by the Right Hon. F. Wrench, a fellow-traveller amongst Slav peoples. I would add a word of thanks to Mr. F. C. Moore for help given in the production of the book.

W. F. BAILEY.

April 22, 1916.

The pronunciation of Czech, Serb and Croat words will be facilitated by remembering the following values :—

C = *ts* (as in *cats*).
č = *tch* (as *ch* in *chimney*).
ć = *ch* (soft, as in *château*).
j = *y* (as in *year*).
š = *sh* (as in *show*).
ž = *zh* (as *j* in French *jour*).

In Polish :—

c = *ts*.
aj = *ie*.
sz = *sh*.
cz = *ch* in *chin*.
ie = *yay*.
dz = *j* in *Jew*.

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THE SLAVS OF THE WAR ZONE

INTRODUCTION

THE early history of the relation between the Teutonic and Slav peoples in Central Europe throws a curious light on the situation of to-day. The Slavs when first known to classical writers differed remarkably from their Teutonic neighbours and rivals. The Germanic peoples, from the earliest times, seem to have had a capacity for cohesion, and much reverence for authority. They were always prepared to obey. They did not resent an iron rule. They sank their personality in their community. Consequently they were efficient conquerors. The Slavs on the other hand were individualists. They were so impatient of authority that it was with difficulty that they could be got to combine, even in their own defence, against outside foes. Yet they were personally brave, and when led by persons of another race they were most capable soldiers. But these characteristics left them a subject people. Their name became a synonym for forced and captive labour. Every language in Europe added to its vocabulary the word "slave" as the domineering Teutonic conquerors supplied the markets of the Continent with prisoners taken from a people too personally independent for mutual defence. By nature they were wanderers. Singly they were capable of valorous adventures. In small parties they were good pirates, and they made their prowess felt not alone in the Baltic with the Island of Rügen as their headquarters, but also in the Adriatic and Ægean seas. As a people, however, they lacked cohesion, and they fell under the curse of the Gibeonites and there never failed to be of them bondsmen—hewers of wood and drawers of water. They were not a practical people as were their neighbours the Germans, but they were an artistic people, and early in their history showed a talent for music and poetry. Although an idealistic race their religious organization was

remarkably undeveloped. Their god of Heaven, their chief deity, the Thunderer, had as sons the god of the Sun, and the god of cattle. Their evil deity was Stribog, the god of storms. In early times when first historically described they seem to have got along very successfully without temples, images or priests—nature was their temple. Their goddesses were relatively unimportant—with the exception, perhaps, of the goddesses of Spring, and of Death and Winter—and were mainly river and woodland nymphs. However, they were adequately supplied with man-eating witches, vampires, and were wolves. After death the soul, they believed, had a long journey to go in search of a paradise, and had to be carefully equipped for the journey. Their pagan festivals were chiefly concerned with the seasons—the solstices and the equinoxes, and these functions, as we shall see, continue to the present day to be kept as Christian festivals.

The central European Slavs are in two groups—the northern and southern, and reach from the Baltic on the north to the Mediterranean on the south. Classified according to language and community of interests they comprise Russians, Poles, Ruthenes, Czechs, and Slovaks, who form the northern group, and Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs,* who constitute the southern (Jugo-Slavs). With the exception of the first and the last all these peoples live mainly in Austria-Hungary, where they comprise one-half of the entire population, the other half of which is made up of Germans (25 per cent.), Magyars (20 per cent.), and Roumanians (4 per cent.). These northern and southern Slav groups are divided from one another by a broad stretch of country which lies along the course of the river Danube from where it leaves Bavaria down to the Black Sea, and which is inhabited in succession by Germans, Magyars, and Roumanians.

When the history of the origin of the present war comes to be written it will probably be conceded that it was mainly due to the clash of interests between the Teutonic and Slav peoples. The desire of Germany for world expansion, to secure "a place in the sun," to acquire colonies, and to extend trade, were doubtless all contributory reasons, but the determining as well as the proximate cause was the racial struggle that for many centuries has been the origin of most of the central European Wars. Germany has had on its borders large communities of alien peoples differing from it in language, outlook, and aspirations. It regarded these Slav races as low grade, and always exhibited towards them the hatred and contempt that dominant castes have for what they consider inferior—that is less masterful

* The Bulgars are not pure Slavs.

—peoples within their borders. Germany has included in its Empire many persons of non-Teutonic descent, and her policy has been to retain and exploit them. She regards these alien peoples as servile races. Sometimes for diplomatic purposes she has dissembled her antipathies, but she has never forgotten them. She looks upon her Polish subjects as a stern schoolmaster views his pupils. Their duty is to obey, not to think or argue. Russia, her great Slav neighbour, she always regarded with a certain contempt mingled with fear. She adopted towards her a policy of cajolery and intrigue. The Russian Government being that of an autocracy ruling through a powerful bureaucracy introduced into the country by the German-born Empress Catherine—a bureaucracy extremely democratic in its composition and formation—was remarkably open to this species of influence. Its bureaucracy was drawn from members of the limited educated classes in an immense population of illiterate, unambitious, idealistic, patient, religious people—a people without an effective aristocracy, without leaders, without self-governing aspirations. The lowest in the land might attain to high government promotion did he show himself astute, capable, and useful. In this way the Russian bureaucracy was democratic; and an autocracy can have no more powerful support than a democratic bureaucracy.

A large proportion of the immense population of Russia is uneducated and neglected. The great landowners along the Baltic littoral, who are mainly descended from German settlers in Courland, Livonia, and Esthonia, enjoyed many advantages of education and environment which enabled them to attain high rank in the service of the state; and they were consequently in a position to make their influence felt in Russian government at an early date. The authority they exercised was altogether pro-German in its aims and efforts; and it resulted in so directing the autocratic rule of the Czar as to aid German designs rather than Russian interests. What Prussia dreaded most was a pro-Slav policy on the part of Russia in Poland. It saw that such a policy would be a serious menace to itself in its own treatment of its Polish subjects; it saw that sympathetic and irresponsible governments of the same race could not exist side by side without manifest danger; and it guided the movements of Russian Officialdom in the direction it desired. Thus the great Motherland of the Slav peoples became their oppressor and their tyrant, and instead of building up the race into one great community and Federation, it played the Teutonic game and alienated those whom it ought to have attracted. Herein lies the explanation of the tragedy of Poland.

The partitions of Poland in the eighteenth century were the

work of rulers, not of peoples—of German-influenced rulers who knew not the meaning of nationality, who cared not at all for the wishes and aspirations of the peoples they governed or conquered. The Poles were a Slav people of high intelligence who in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries became a great European power ruled by a Lithuanian dynasty. But this power suffered from inherent weaknesses which led to its downfall. The ultimate determining cause of the collapse was, as Professor Alison Phillips has pointed out, the fact that they had never developed a true national consciousness. Like the Turks and the Magyars, the Poles were a conquering race which never amalgamated with the conquered peoples, as the Franks had done in Gaul and the Normans in England to form an united nation.*

After their conquests the Poles reduced the original inhabitants to a condition of serfdom, and the landowners—the great lords (*pans*) and the gentry (*szlachta*)—were alone recognized as the "Polish people." Added to this social and political gulf was a barrier of religious hatred. The Poles were Catholics while many of their subject peoples belonged to the Orthodox Eastern Church. These obstacles to a national unity were utilized by powerful and unscrupulous neighbours and Poland as an independent Kingdom had ceased to exist before the Napoleonic Wars changed the face of Europe.

Western Europeans realize with difficulty the power of dynastic influence in the government of races and peoples. The rulers of Germany and of Russia thought little and cared little for the feelings and desires of the subject masses whose political destinations they trafficked in as men buy and sell cattle in the market place. We can see the power of dynasty in the manner in which the Balkan States have been brought into the present war. The influence of hereditary government which has well nigh disappeared in Western Europe is still effective in the centre and in the East. The rise of the spirit of nationality has tended to counteract the influence of dynasty, and the subject races of Central Europe have become vocal and urgent in their demand for national unity and self-government.

Of the three great Imperial States of Central and Eastern Europe Russia and Germany have almost learned the lesson of the necessity of race union if their Empires are to endure. Each represents a great and growing people. Each is affected in its foreign relations by the fact that some of its dominant race lives outside itself. Russia is the motherland of the Slav peoples, Germany of the Teutonic.

* "Poland," p. 42

There are, however, 12 millions of Teutons in Austria-Hungary, and 23 millions of Slavs, exclusive of 8 millions more in Serbia and Bulgaria. Also Russia and Germany have large elements of non-Slav and non-Teutonic peoples within their borders. Both do their utmost to Germanize and Russianize their alien races, and in the process have been guilty of many acts of oppression. But Russian misgovernment has been mainly of people of its own race whose relationship it is beginning to recognize. Germany on the other hand has introduced the strong hand to break the resistance and subdue the spirit of an alien race forcibly dragged within its borders.

Austria-Hungary, the third of this trio of empires, differs from the other two in that she is an agglomeration of races that will not mix, of peoples who will not amalgamate. She includes within her boundaries 12 million Germans, 23 million Slavs, and 10 million Magyars.

Germans rule Austria, Magyars dominate Hungary. The Slavs who equal both in number are treated as subject peoples, and are governed on the well-known principle of "divide and rule." This empire of divisions and contrasts has up to the present been held together by three main forces—the dynastic influence of the House of Hapsburg, the joint army of Austria and Hungary, and the Catholic Church.*

The two States—the Austrian Empire and the Hungarian Kingdom—are independent of each other, each possessing its own constitution, legislative bodies and Executive Departments. They are held in connection by having one Sovereign and common ministries for affairs that affect both States such as foreign policy, the army and navy and financial matters that are mutual. Each State has a large population of Slavs. Teutonic-governed Austria rules over 6½ millions of Czechs and Slovaks, 5 millions of Poles, 3½ millions of Ruthenes and 2 millions of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. While Magyar-controlled Hungary governs 2 millions of Slovaks, half a million of Ruthenes, and 3 millions of Croats and Serbs. In addition 2 millions of Bosnian Slavs are under the administration of the joint Austrian-Hungarian Finance minister in Vienna.†

In the following pages an attempt is made to describe the various Slav peoples who live in separate communities between the Russian Steppes and the Adriatic Sea. Starting from the province of Podolia and its chief town Kamenets (Kamieniec) the home of many races and many religions, and the scene of many

* Mr. Seaton Watson in "The War and Democracy" (Macmillan & Co.), p. 38.

† See "The Statesman's Year Book, 1915," pp. 683 and 698.

attacks and repeated invasions of Tartars, and Turks, an account is given of the country and its peasants up to the town of Husiatyn in Galicia, the border town between Russia and Austria. The people of Eastern Galicia known as "Ruthenes" are really Little or Red Russians separated artificially from the remainder of their race who inhabit south-western Russia to the number of 23 millions. Dynastic changes that took no note of relationship of race or of language, cut them off from their own people and transferred them first to Poland and after the partition of that kingdom to Austria.

It has often been asserted that the government of Vienna has ruled its Galician subjects more kindly than the remainder of Poland was treated after the Partition by its German and Russian masters; and this is probably true. It was a matter of much importance to Austria to have on its side a people who could be turned into good soldiers and be a make-weight against the newly incorporated Poles, so the policy was adopted of setting one Slav people against another—the usual Hapsburg policy of "divide and rule." The Little Russian peasants of Galicia were converted into a new nationality and a new name was invented for them. They were called "Ruthenes" so as to obliterate from memory their Russian origin. But they and their language and their literature are Russian. In religion they stand between Catholic Poland and "Orthodox" Russia. They belong to the Uniate Greek Church, acknowledging the authority of the Pope while adhering to the ritual, discipline and doctrine of the Orthodox Russian Church. The Austrian Government—the great supporter of Catholicism—has looked with disfavour on the propagandist efforts of Catholic Poles to win over the Ruthenes. Such a junction of religions would tend to strengthen the Polish element in Galicia—a consummation devoutly to be avoided.

In their efforts to manufacture a new nationality for their Little Russian subjects the Austrian Government also tried to give them a language of their own, with Latin characters to take the place of Cyrillic, a new phonetic spelling, new words collected from all quarters and new grammatical forms. A strong effort was also made to set up opposition and ill-feeling between this manufactured nationality and their Russian relatives over the border. They were pampered with benefits, they were well supplied with schools, churches and museums. They were given a large share in the magistracy and bureaucracy and their religion was favoured even at the expense of the Roman Catholic church. For the last half century Austria has done everything in its power to create and set up nationalities of Poles, and

Ruthenes as a bulwark against Russia. There are 4 millions of these Ruthenes in the Austrian Empire. They are a passive and melancholy people, often deceitful and cunning—the characteristics of a race long tyrannized over and ground down as these were by the Polish aristocracy who lived amongst them. They are, however, rapidly improving. The competition of the Austrian and Russian Empires for their favour—for Russia has not been idle—is having its effect and the people are rapidly rising in the social scale.

Eastern Galicia is mainly occupied by Ruthenes, but as we journey west Poles predominate. Of this race are the rich landowners and aristocrats of the northern Carpathian Plain that extends through Galicia across the Russian border into Podolia where it amalgamates with the great Steppe country that stretches away to the Urals and the Caucasus

The Poles have been described as a people with a grand past, but a sorry present. We have seen how their want of understanding, and their ill-treatment of their own subject peoples destroyed them as a homogeneous kingdom, and made them an easy prey to the powerful states that grew up on their borders. It is only of recent years when their kingdom had been destroyed, and their independence trampled in the dust that their economic renaissance began. Out of evil may come good, and as will appear from the descriptions given in the following pages Poland was on the way to a period of revival and rebuilding when with the war came chaos. In these pages the country is described as it was when the war broke out: as it was with its growing prosperity; with its better understanding with Russia; with the spirit of comradeship and nationality that was rapidly cementing the gentry (Szlachta) and the peasants: all to be destroyed by the coming of the German armies.

After Poland comes Bohemia, the home of the Czechs—a Slav people whom the spirit of John Huss still influences. Of recent years as in centuries gone by they have exhibited a courage, a determination, and a persistent nationalism that have won for them a position of remarkable power in the Austrian Empire. A couple of generations ago they were of small account in the Parliament of Vienna. Their language, which had almost ceased to be written, was gradually revived during the last century. Now it is ousting German all over Bohemia, and the Czech people are rapidly gathering national and political strength.

Bohemia is the principal and most progressive province of the Austrian Empire although in population it is exceeded by

Galicia. It stands in a ring of mountains right in the centre of Europe almost equi-distant from the seas of the north and of the south. It contains the most western of the Slavonic races, and was the roadway and the meeting place of the migrant peoples who centuries ago roamed over the European continent. It is rich in mineral wealth and in agriculture. Its soil is very highly developed—one half of its area being under cultivation. Its fertility can be seen by any one who visits the "Paradise" and the "Garden of Bohemia," and who travels the "Golden Road" on the upper waters of the river Elbe. It is one of the most important manufacturing centres in Europe. Almost every industry is represented. It contains the most valuable medicinal springs on the continent. Two-thirds of its population are Slavs (Czechs) and one-third Germans, while over 95 per cent. belong to the Roman Catholic Church. But the Czechs are Catholics somewhat Protestant in character. They have still in them much of the stubborn spirit of their fifteenth century leader and patriot John Huss. They exhibit an intellectual independence, a stern insistence on their right to private judgment, that are not strongly characteristic of other Catholic peoples of Europe.

Prague, the capital of the Czechs, is a place of many memories. Nature designed it to be the chief city of Bohemia as it is near the centre of the country. Tradition makes it the residence of the legendary Prince Krok and his masterful daughter Labussa and her peasant husband Přemysl. Long centuries later two fierce battles of the Hussite wars were fought here (A.D. 1420). Here also the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) began, and over a century later (1757) the Seven Years' War may be said to have commenced with its siege. At the "Blue Star" hotel in Prague was signed the Treaty that ended the Austrian-Prussian War of 1866, and made a Peace that drove Austria out of the German confederation back upon herself; that gave Hungary its chance, and made Dualism triumphant. The Peace of Prague in fact changed at once the balance of central Europe; making the way for a great and powerful German Empire while it handed over Austria to a conglomeration of races not alone non-German but anti-German. And yet the influence of dynasty, the organization of government and the power of the Church have held together up to the present this strange and creaky empire. Its very weakness and immobility have made it the tool and the cat's paw of the resolute, ambitious, and unscrupulous government of Germany.

Akin to the Czechs, but on a somewhat lower social grade are the Slovaks of Moravia and north-western Hungary, districts

in which they seem to have lived ever since the fifth century. During all these years they have been a subject people—ruled in succession by the Avars, the Franks and finally by the Magyars, who down to recent times have tried in every way to destroy their nationality, even the use of their language being forbidden in their churches and in their schools. They are essentially an agricultural people, slow in mind, peaceful in character, fond of music and song, wandering often as tinkers and farm labourers all over Austria and Hungary. As wet-nurses and children's maids they are much sought after in Vienna where their well-starched white bonnets, short full skirts, and brightly coloured aprons and stockings are familiar sights. In population they number about 2½ millions, and their language may be classified as a variety of the Czech. In religion like their neighbours in Bohemia they are 95 per cent. Catholic.

Crossing the German-speaking Archduchy of Austria and Magyar-ruled Hungary we come to the country of the Southern Slavs—the Slovenes, the Croats and the Serbs.

The first of these peoples—the Slovenes—numbering about 1¼ millions, dwell in Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and portions of Istria. Here they arrived in the sixth or seventh centuries, driven west by the Avars. Eventually they came under the rule of German nobles, but being a peaceable, placid people they, their language and customs, were not much interfered with, and they were easily and early converted to Christianity. Some attempts were made at the time of the Reformation to introduce new ideas amongst them by means of translations of the Bible and the use of Catechisms ; but the Church after some unsatisfactory controversial efforts adopted the policy of burning all the Slovene books that could be found—a policy that proved successful in rarefying their literature and maintaining their religion. At present about 85 per cent. of these people belong to the Catholic Church.

The Slovenes come south to the Adriatic right into Istria—the Austrian province of Küstenland—up to the suburbs of Trieste, which itself is a city of Italians. Lying between this region and Croatia is the weird, wonderful, desolate country of the Karst. Long years ago denuded of its forests, subjected to the bitter Bora winds from the Balkans that swept away the soil itself, this district assumed a character almost unique in Europe recalling in a way the " bad lands " of Dakota. Crossing this strange series of ridges we come to Croatia, a land of many interests. Its people racially are one with the Serbs but are distinguished from them partly by religion, partly by language. For literature indeed the languages are identical, but the Croats

adopt the Latin alphabet while the Serbs use Cyrillic characters. In their songs, dances, folk-lore and customs, in their brilliant costumes, in their love of colour and embroideries the two people show their race unity. In many districts both peoples still live in patriarchal communities (Zadruga), under which family life is controlled by the eldest and ablest member who exercises absolute power, distributes the work, and administers affairs generally. Both men and women are proud in carriage and handsome in face and figure. Illiterate, warm-hearted, dashing and reckless, the Croats make the best soldiers and sailors in the Hungarian Monarchy.

The population of Croatia is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions, of whom four-fifths belong to the Catholic Church, and the majority of the remainder is made up of members of the Orthodox Church of Serbia.

Akin to the Croatians are the Serbians and the Bosnians, all belonging to the Serbo-Croatian branch of the Slavonic race. The language of the three peoples is almost identical; but in Croatia where the inhabitants are mainly Roman Catholic, it is written in Latin characters; while in Serbia and Bosnia where the Orthodox Greek Church prevails, it is written in Cyrillic. In Bosnia and Herzegovina over two-fifths of the people are adherents of the Orthodox Greek Church, over a third are Moslems and about one-fifth are Roman Catholics. In Serbia the great majority belong to the National (Orthodox) Church. These people resemble one another in their love of poetry and music: in pride in their race and in their history: in their customs, superstitions and beliefs.

In the following pages it is sought to give an account of their various aspects and to describe the terrible harvest that the war reaped among them as furnished by friends who knew and loved them in peaceful days and witnessed the infamy, the terror, and the destruction, that the invasion of their country by the Central European Powers brought upon them.

CHAPTER I

WHERE TWO EMPIRES MEET

It is an imperial highway, the road which leads from Kamenets in Podolia to Husiatyn in Galicia where half-way across a little river the empire of Nicholas the Slav meets the dominions of Franz Joseph the Teuton.

Travellers will find on nearing Husiatyn that over eastwards lie the vast, melancholy, but none the less fertile steppes of Western Russia, across the silent immensity of which stretches this, the last great highway of the Czar. Even in this land of spaciousness such a road is remarkable for its breadth, for it measures in places quite three hundred and thirty feet from side to side.

Kamenets, or Kamieniec, the ancient government town of Podolia, is only twenty-seven miles distant once the Russian-Austrian frontier is reached. Wearisome as may be the eight or nine hours' drive over the saddest, strangest, loneliest, vastest tract of country imaginable, it still cannot dim the glowing memory of old Kamenets, where, once upon a time, Jan Stefanowicz Mazeppa, page to the King of Poland, lived and loved, and where, in the seventeenth century, Pan Michael Wolodyjowski, Sobieski's gallant captain, made his last desperate stand against Sultan Mahommed IV.

Kamenets once seen can never fade from the memory. It is so fascinating, so old, so grey, yet so brilliant with colour, so full of the brave spirit of the past.

The tide of many wars has ebbed and flowed against its massive, five-century old walls, and from its sturdy foundations on the high peninsula which juts out into the small river Smotritch it gazes down, as of old, on the warring hosts of the east and of the west. And still in its streets and by-ways the Orient combats the Occident for supremacy.

Picture the town as it was just before the war, one day in the spring of 1914. Many and very strange folk thronged its big, ill-paved market-place, and passed to and fro along its one

really beautiful boulevard, where the trees were yet bare to the ice-cold north-east wind.

The wintry sunshine gleamed fitfully down on the old fourteenth-century château, and on the cliffs and white houses which rise one above the other upon the hillside, round which the gloomy walls and towers of the ancient fortifications entwine encircling arms. These dark bulwarks, and especially the Kuska gate, seem somehow to overshadow the present and to compel one's thoughts back along the track of time, back to that terrible day when the vanguard of Mahommed's great army, 300,000 strong, rode up to this same Kuska gate to demand the surrender of the exhausted garrison. To quote from Sienkiewicz's "Pan Michael" :—

"They"—the Turks—"came on like a measureless sea—infantry, janissaries, spahis. Each pasha led the troops of his own pashalik. From dawn till night these leaders marched without stopping, moved from one place to another, stationed troops, circled about the fields, pitched tents, which occupied such a space that from the towers and highest points of Kamenyets it was possible in no wise to see the fields free from canvas. It seemed that snow had fallen. Towards evening Kamenyets was enclosed in such a fashion that nothing save pigeons could leave it.

"'My Army may be compared to the sands of the sea. I am a sovereign, and a grandson of the God of Justice. I hate stubborn men. Surrender your town. If you resist you will all perish under the sword, and no voice of man will rise against me!'

"So ran the Sultan's letter, which was fastened to a dart and presented to the Christian dragoons of Kamieniec.

"'But what of Kamenyets?' queried Pan Michael.

"'It shall go to the Sultan for long ages.'

"Whereupon Michael, 'the little knight,' sent a message to his girl-wife who was sheltered in the convent close to the château. The message was :—'*This world is nothing!*'

"And then he took his helmet from his head. He looked awhile on that field of glory, on the corpses, the fragments of walls, on the breastworks, on the guns, and raising his eyes he prayed.

"At that moment the bastions quivered, an awful roar rent the air; bastions, towers, walls, horses, guns, living men, corpses, masses of earth, all torn upwards in a flame, and mixed, pounded together, as it were, into one dreadful carnage, flew towards the sky.

"Thus died Pan Michael Volodyovski, the Hector of Kamenyets."

In the Church of St. Stanislaus he is buried, where his great Captain laid him to rest, and the echo of the final word of his burial service rings ever clearer and more triumphant :—

"Salvator! Salvatio."

A busy place is Kamenets on a fair day, and a gay place. The East colours everything. These peoples and tribes who live on the borderland of two civilizations are still as primitive as they were in times gone by. Their ideas and customs date back long centuries. They are still more or less barbarians, but barbarians straining unconsciously towards higher civilization. They are barbarians filled, though they themselves are unaware of it, with the spirit of revolt and agitation.

On that day the Jewish element predominated. Long lines of lugubriously apparelled sons of the chosen race sat hunkered together on the *trottoirs* or in the gutters, looking like so many roosting crows in their greasy black kaftans and high black caps, low, square-toed shoes, and grey stockings. The absence of corkscrew curls proclaimed them subjects of the Czar, whose law forbids them to wear long hair, a Jewish predilection not interfered with by the Austrian Government. These gentlemen of the gutter act as interpreters and guides, and they alone, amongst all the peoples and tribes which make up the population of this district, are able to speak several languages. Strangely enough, though the Austrian frontier lies so near, Russian is the only tongue spoken in Kamenets, and, consequently, these Jews are necessary should hotel accommodation, food, etc., be required by people unable to converse in that language. Employment did not evidently present itself to them on that occasion, and their attitude was distinctly hopeless. Near by, their ugly, half-clad wives and children had set up several score of dirty booths and stalls, which were heaped up with every conceivable kind of merchandise. On one stall were dozens of black loaves, onions, garlic, apples, grey-looking pastry cakes, honey cakes, and jars of gherkins. On another were pots and pans, brown and brightly-coloured crockery, broad leather boots (*sapogi*), sandals (*lapti*), and enormous felt footgear (*válenki*). Slavonic feet are, by the way, as spacious as most things in Russia, and size seventeen is not unusual in masculine boots. In proximity to such goods were webs of linen, exquisite embroideries, rolls of cloth, cheap jewellery, ribbons, *ikons*, crucifixes, fine laces, and piles of horribly odoriferous cast-off clothing.

The weather had been atrocious for weeks, so the cobbles of the streets and market-place were covered with frozen slush, and those peasants who had tramped into the town from a distance

were spattered and crusted with mud from head to heels. The entrance to the *Gostinny Dvor* * bazaar, or town storehouse, was crowded with would-be purchasers, and black-coated, long-booted, long-haired, long-bearded merchants (*Kuptsi*) stood at their office and shop doors encouraging trade. Lounging about, tired, probably, by their trudge over execrable roads, were savage-visaged, long-locked, black-eyed country folk of Podolia and the adjoining provinces. These Southern Russians are strangely dissimilar in dialect, in habits and in appearance to their big, heavy-limbed and heavy-featured, blue-eyed, patient, plodding, docile fellow-patriots of Great Russia. Lithe, swift-moving, and swift-thinking, dark and passionate, the Southern or Little Russians bear more resemblance to the Poles, and, like the Poles, they possess the artistic temperament, and the majority of Russian dancers, writers, artists, actors, etc., are recruited from amongst them. From Little Russia, too, come most of the exceedingly beautiful women of the *demi-monde* of Petrograd and Moscow, even of Vienna and Paris. In spite of the bleakness of the morning and a wind which cuts like a razor, the complexions of these peasant girls retained an ivory-like tint, and their dark, almond-shaped eyes sparkled with health and not a little of the coquetry that gained, for many of their sisters, the admiration of princes.

Such a babble of tongues! It was as though the confusion of Babel had fallen upon the jostling crowds. All shouted at the top of their voices at the same time, chaffering, haggling, gesticulating. A hand-to-hand conflict in which all would be engaged seemed imminent. Every one pushed and hustled, every one carried mountainous bundles and parcels, for the Russians never buy things until in dire need of them, and then they must perforce carry their purchases home themselves.

Barefooted women from Bessarabia, their coarse black hair bound with gay ribbons, their ears weighed down by heavy silver or brass earrings, rubbed shoulders with brilliant-eyed fierce-moustached Roumanians and Wallachians, attired in braided jackets, loose trousers, moccasins, and high fur headgear, who shuffled along in front of their linen-clad, sheepskin-coated wives. How these females managed to preserve their white chemises from the mud, how they found time in the few free moments of their hard life to embroider so beautifully their aprons and jackets, to weave the lovely horsehair and silver fringes with which their garments are adorned, is a subject for wonder. Then, too, there were huge-framed Kurds, Greek

* "Guests' Court."

priests, fezzed and turbaned Turks, Moldavians in cream coats reaching almost to their ankles, covered with numberless red worsted tags, their heads surmounted by conical black chimney-pot hats bound round with coloured braid. And there were stolid Bulgarians and Poles in their national red, blue, and white costumes, also denizens of Great Russia in clumsy, much-patched Kaftans and "stove-pipe" hats, under which a mat of unkempt, tow-coloured hair stood out round their broad, dirty countenances shading their watery, kindly, grey-blue eyes.

Long, springless carts, full up of occupants, rumbled by, making a tremendous clatter on the cobbles, and wealthy young farmers—gay dogs these—sitting high in their Eastern saddles above their flowing-maned, flowing-tailed steppe horses, dashed *ventre à terre* through the pedestrians, bidding fair to upset every man, woman, and child that crossed their path, not to mention the many miniature Orthodox street altars, prettily tricked out with gold and silver tinsel, that came in their way. Their rivals in horsemanship were some Cossacks, "the wolves of the forest." Magnificent and relentless, they are as stern and hard of face as they are gentle and almost childlike of heart. The animals they ride are small, swift, and surefooted, more ready to reply to coercion than to persuasion. People who have only seen the Cossacks of the Imperial Guard in the Russian capital wearing their handsome, crimson uniforms with white facings would, perhaps, be disappointed in their appearance when not on Imperial guard duty. These Cossacks wore a sombre dress, all-enveloping black cloaks, black astrakhan caps with crowns of scarlet cloth, short sabres, and heavy double cartridge belts across their shoulders.

As the winter had broken and the snow was melting, sleighs had given place to wheeled vehicles, and curious indeed are the carriages in this part of the world. There are the mail carts (*tegela*), four-wheeled instruments of torture drawn by three or four horses driven with six or eight reins, over which the "*isvoschik*" bends forward, uttering piercing yells, and maintaining a furious gallop, indifferent to the fact that—as frequently happens—he may return home minus one of his team, and equally indifferent to the sufferings of his human freight, who are obliged, in the absence of seats, to squat on the hard planks of the cart's bottom, or on some self-provided trunk or bundle of straw. Then there are the hackney cabs—the "*droshkies*"—scarcely less painful to those they carry than the mail carts. These are of two kinds, the slow and the fast. The first crawls at a snail's pace from cobble to cobble, meandering along unfrequented avenues and deserted roads. The fast droshkies are used when

a swift journey has to be made over crowded thoroughfares. Anything in human form more amiable, soft-tongued, and fatalistic than the average Russian cabby—or "*isvoschik*"—it would be impossible to conceive. For such characteristics we could almost forgive all their filth and callousness towards human and animal life.

Kamenets being not only a government but also a garrison town, soldiers are to be seen everywhere, and very alert they looked in their thick, blanket-like, yet well-cut, overcoats, which have since stood them in such good stead on the Polish battle-fields. There is nothing showy about these soldiers of the Czar, they are not dressed—the rank and file—for beauty, but for service. From their flat caps, from their sabres, carried edge upwards, to the last button on their sleeves and down to their gigantic high boots, they are practical. Only the Russian officers on the staff, or those commanding crack regiments, indulge in gorgeousness. And as some of these latter drove swiftly past in their open carriages, their hands rising and falling in salute, the white, crimson, and gold of their uniforms served to remind us—had it been possible to forget—that Kamenets was the last western outpost of Russia the magnificent.

And, of course, the gipsies were there—the musicians, cattle-dealers, horse-breeders, horse-doctors, horse-thieves, and fortune-tellers of this and most other countries. Despised wanderers, nicknamed "the vermin," they are, however, like the Jews, recognized as dirty necessities, though, unlike the latter, they can lay claim to public popularity, because, if they do not observe the slightest morality, they at any rate contribute generously to the joy of life. How the Russian gipsies earned their reputation for physical beauty it is difficult to imagine, for, when met with out of books, they are, as a rule, ugly, though, perhaps, finer of feature and more graceful than their kinsfolk of the Hungarian plains. Their welcome is secure in every restaurant and in every dingy little "*trakir*," where the peasants indulge in three-farthing glasses of fragrant golden tea. Their dress, consisting of short skirts—or breeches—and jackets of gaudy colours, knee-boots of red, yellow, green, or bronze, and gay handkerchiefs, or caps, is as barbaric as their extraordinary wild dancing, characterized by its ever-increasing speed and noise, their fantastic music and singing terminating in a series of deafening chords. Gipsy girl-dancers occupy a position in Russia similar to that of the Nautch girls of India; and in aristocratic circles it is customary to engage their services for social entertainments. There was an especially lively gipsy troupe dancing that day in one of the principal cafés of the town. In the centre of a whirling, glittering ring

stood the chief singer of the band beside the accompanist, who played on a weird species of guitar (*balalika*). And wonderful singing and dancing it was, as heady, as exciting, as satisfying to the senses as the *vodka* which was imbibed all around.

The gipsy song was taken up and lilted by the passers-by in the street. The sun sparkled brightly on the minaret of the fourteenth-century church of SS. Peter and Paul, from which minaret, during the Turkish dominion (1672–99) the faithful of Islam were summoned to prayer. And beyond the church the Czar's Standard fluttered in the wind above the hoary old castle, above the spot where, on the day before his great fight, Pan Michael and his wife Basia kissed for the last time, and the little knight made a tryst with his love to meet "at the heavenly gate," in the strong city of God, "where there will be no tears, only endless rejoicing; no Pagans, nor cannon, nor mines under the walls, only peace and happiness." *

It was ten o'clock in the morning, and time to climb into the "*tarantass*"—a covered vehicle, happily possessed of springs—in which the journey from Kamenets to the Russian-Austrian frontier was to be undertaken.

Passing out of the town at a break-neck speed down the steep way which ends at the gates of the fortifications, many thoughts and speculations crowded the mind. How long will it be before Kamenets awakes to modern life; when will electric lighting take the place of petroleum street lamps; when will electric trams oust its few teeth-shattering omnibuses; when will its hotels shelter less voracious parasites, and more competent servants?

It is a drive of between eight or nine hours' duration from Kamenets to Husiatyn, from where as lazy a train as was ever forced to convey passengers starts to make the journey, via Trembowla and Tarnopol, to Lemberg (Lwów) in Galicia.

For the first hour or so after leaving the town the broad highway was lively with traffic, with peasants on foot and peasants in waggons, with "*droshkies*" and eccentric *phaëtons* peculiar to this part of Russia and the Caucasus. But after some miles had been traversed, all signs of life vanished, swallowed up in the vast emptiness. On these great steppes silence broods. Humanity is nothing. The waste of land lies empty and still. There is only space, boundless except where the earth's curve creates an imaginary limitation. Villages certainly exist, but are hidden amongst the mighty billows of land which, like huge Atlantic waves turned solid, roll away and away into the far distance.

* Sienkiewicz's "Pan Michael."

A storm blew up. Heavy battalions of clouds began mustering to the north-east. Within ten minutes a hailstorm had burst, and solid lumps of ice, as big as hazel nuts, came rattling down in fury, cutting the skin, numbing the fingers, paralysing every faculty. To learn what cold can be, one has only to be caught in a spring hail shower on the steppes !

But it did not last long ! In half an hour the sky had cleared, the sun had ventured timidly out, and the sodden country gleamed like a silvery sea. It was not difficult, under the influence of the biting north-easter, to picture these plains as they are in winter—an infinite sheet of blinding, dazzling snow, which piles up to a depth of four feet during a day or a night. It comes driving along in a terrible hurricane, which envelops in oblivion any unfortunate wayfarers who may be caught in it, especially when it blows horizontally.

But it was hard to imagine this vastness as it appears on a hot summer day—a golden ocean of grain under a cloudless blue sky. Just then the steppes were brown, with patches here and there of vivid green, and more patches of steely, half-melted snow reflecting a chill and steely sky.

It was heavy travelling over the slippery, sticky mire, which, a week previously, had been deep spotless snow. The carriage swayed to and fro, throwing the occupants from side to side. So violently did it lurch that it was a matter for thankfulness that the wheels and axle remained intact, and that the harness—which was made of new rope with interludes of leather—did not snap.

A very long, very narrow waggon hove in view, moving at an extremely leisurely pace, seemingly unguided, until, when within colliding distance, a bull-like roar from its depths gave evidence that the three starved-looking, hairy horses which drew it were not entirely without a master, and a thin, sallow face, with grotesquely shaggy eyebrows and Mongol-shaped greenish eyes, shadowed by a mud-clotted, furry turban, peered for a moment drunkenly over the side, and then sank again out of sight, muttering—"*Padi ! Padi !*"—and the waggon rumbled on into nowhere with the patron saint of drunkards as protector.

The miles were jolted over and left in the rear, and the surroundings changed slightly. Gaunt windmills and other marks of humanity's presence appeared. Narrow side tracks, leading from the main highway out on to the open steppe, became more numerous, littered with wisps of straw and hay—sure sign of an approach to a village—and pedestrians commenced to appear, as it were, out of nowhere. Flocks of geese and herds of swine drifted by under the guardianship of girls and boys, who were

sometimes on foot, sometimes mounted on little steppe ponies, which both sexes rode straddle-wise without saddle or bridle. Their untamed eyes and savage type of countenance proclaimed them descendants of those Kalmuk intruders, who, in the words of a contemporary writer "came up to raid like a flash of lightning," and, "having no fixed place of abode, sought to conquer all lands and colonize none, who burned the villages and the churches, and led the people away into slavery, who made the land ring with the cry of the vultures, fighting with one another over the bodies of the slain; and the ravens scream as they fly to the spoil."

Presently a band of about thirty or forty country people floundered into sight. They represented a whole village, and were on their way *en masse* to seek employment as field labourers in some Russian agricultural district, where they would be put up for hire in the market-place. The men were walking, the women, most of them, were huddled together in the springless carts. All carried their belongings in huge bundles. Even the children were being taken, and the babies were tied on to their respective mothers' backs, whence they surveyed life, whilst sucking away contentedly at the sloppy bread poultices (*soska*), which their mammas, like all affectionate Russian peasant mammas, had tied across their mouths with pieces of linen to ensure them constant nourishment and diversion, or—as often occurs—death by choking. It was not surprising to learn subsequently that this particular community were *en route* for a town two hundred miles distant, and that they were going to walk every inch of the way! They appeared cheerful, and, with true Slavonic politeness, lifted their hats in greeting, calling out salutations in their soft guttural dialect. Courteous, but never cringing, good-tempered when civilly treated, but obstinate and sullen as mules when annoyed, lazy, but wonderfully shrewd, these peasants of South-Western Russia—these "*Mazeppas*," as they are christened by their compatriots—are a very likeable people.

By evening Husiatyn was reached, and there it was, alas! necessary to spend the night in an hotel kept, like every hotel in Galicia, by Jews. That dreadful night solved the mystery as to why such an easy-going, civil, indolent, religiously broad-minded race as the Slavs, dislike, scorn, hate, and persecute the Jews, more especially the Askenazim variety of the race.

These Askenazim Jews are decidedly loathsome. Their unhealthy faces, lanky figures, oily curls, and mournful *Kaftans* are nasty enough, but when we add the fact that in popular estimation they never invent or produce anything which would tend to

the betterment of human existence and civilization, that they live by usury, cheating, and bribery, and—more unpopular still—are the proprietors of almost every hotel and inn in the Slav lands, two-thirds of which are verminous and impossible, it is easy to understand why the unbusinesslike, thriftless, but big-souled people amongst whom they live have developed a spirit of anti-Semiticism. The "fifty-verst law" of Russia, by which Jews are forbidden to reside within this distance of the frontier, has been ineffectual, probably because the Russians, in spite of the law, have been steadily pushing their Jews towards the Austrian border, to the great alarm of that country, and, however objectionable, these Israelites must, after all, live somewhere! So it comes about that the country districts on the Russian-Galician frontier are made hideous by filthy Jewish settlements, and the towns are overrun by Israelites who are believed to be all guile.

For two long and exasperating hours, the Customs officials had to be interviewed, the negotiations taking place through the medium of a greedy, evil-smelling, hooked-nosed, beady-eyed member of the Chosen Race.

Tickets were taken for Lemberg (Lwów), and it was a relief to see the last of this Hebrew interpreter, and scramble into the fusty, overheated train which, more than half-an-hour after the hour fixed for starting, was only beginning, by the emittance of doleful and complaining snorts and wheezy snuffles, to show itself possessed of the steam of life. But in Russia and Poland time is of small account, and it can be said that hereabouts few individuals can assert that they have ever lost a train or known any one to have been killed by a train—unless suicidally, and that must have been a matter of considerable difficulty.

CHAPTER II

LIFE IN EASTERN GALICIA

THERE are few places in Europe less known to the ordinary traveller than Eastern Galicia—where the great plains of Russia meet, across the Dneister, the Carpathian wall that semicircles Hungary. Here it may be said that Austria ends. Galicia is the largest province, and has the severest climate, in that most conglomerate of empires. It has long and bitter winters, short and wet springs, burning summers, and tranquil autumns. Its inhabitants are nearly one-half Poles and the remainder mostly Ruthenians, these latter predominating as you go eastward to the Russian frontier.

The train, as has been pointed out, from Husiatyn to Lemberg (Lwów) is unquestionably primitive and exceedingly deliberate in action. The *Konduktor* blows his whistle, the engine shrieks hysterically, the *Konduktor* blows a louder blast, the engine emits a series of weird noises and gives various signs of an intention to start, while intending passengers, not to be hurried by any number of whistles and shrieks, pick their way slowly towards the carriages over the sleeping prostrate forms of scores of peasants reposing at full length on the platform and in the waiting rooms. These people have a talent for sleep, and one of the most arduous tasks of a Russian policeman is to protect somnolent wayfarers, to awaken them if the fierce heat of summer or the low temperature of winter (sometimes 30° below zero) threatens them with death, and to see that those who have drunk themselves into a comatose condition come to no harm. The Slavs have great belief in the efficacy of sleep. They hate to interrupt slumber, and the roughest *isvoschik* will drive his *droshky* most tenderly in and out amongst the hundreds of dozing workpeople who fling themselves down during the hour following their midday meal, in the gutters, and even in the very centre of the busiest thoroughfares.*

* These same droshky drivers, however, have no particular tenderness for the rights of sober traffic. I well remember once when driving to the Tiflis Railway Station in Transcaucasia encountering a great flock of broad-tailed sheep. They covered the roadway in dense numbers. The *isvoschik*

Huge are the bundles carried by Slavonic travellers. Even the upper classes, when obliged to break a journey at any of the smaller towns, bring an inordinate amount of baggage, for they have a rooted objection to strange bed linen, pillows, and towels —not without reason—and in consequence are forced to carry these articles wherever they go, along with any number of bulky cushions and rugs, for use during the long drives over vile roads which they may have to undertake. And probably this is the reason why provincial hotel keepers do not generally include bedding and toilet linen with their beds!

It is one thing, however, to travel with a house at one's back when the journey is done by carriage or rail, but quite another when—as with the poor folk in the Station of Husiatyn—hundreds of miles had to be traversed on foot. Beside each recumbent form several large bundles are stacked, each bundle secured in a brilliantly coloured wrapper. In one is food; black bread, and a horrible kind of paste composed of pounded meat, lard, garlic and onions, and a few battered *piroghi* (pies). In another a *samovar*, teapot, tumbler, spoons, a flask of vodka, and various other odds and ends. In a third, clothing of sorts. Under every sleeper's head is a large pillow, which comprises the owner's entire bedding, and on these pillows they take their rest whenever the opportunity offers. Poor souls! They were fourth-class passengers, and were waiting for a slow train. Not for them the *Schnellzug*, with its lightning speed of twenty miles per hour! So they slept while their infant offspring sprawled and quarrelled, wailed and sucked, around them, profoundly oblivious of the fact that the platform, waiting rooms, and entrance doors were becoming congested by a wondering, gaping, group of newly arrived peasants like themselves, who, clumsy in their sheepskins, and heavily laden with baggage, stood wedged together, dumb, ox-eyed, like cattle waiting for the driver's whip.

At last the *Schnellzug* starts, but it moves with aggravating slowness—the engine consuming wood only—across the monotonous, sloping plains which intervene between Husiatyn and Trembówla.

Trembówla possesses only one interesting feature, an old castle round which hovers a dim romance connected with Sobieski and a certain fair and brave lady who, tradition says, made a gallant defence of the fortress until the Polish hero arrived with reinforcements.

did not hestitate. He lashed his horses and drove through, and it was only when he had jambed his droshky on a pile of damaged animals that he had perforce to call a halt, and he could not understand the protests of his passengers.

On approaching Tarnopol the spires of its ancient Ruthenian church, which history declares to have been three times, in the long ago, captured by the Moslems, and three times recaptured by the soldiers of the Cross, rise gracefully against the sky.

But the west has never really conquered Tarnopol. The fierce sons of the Prophet, with all their darkness and horror, have gone generations ago, but, before they retreated, they left their blood behind them. They kissed the pale Christian women's faces, so that to-day olive skins, obliquely set black eyes, and an Oriental manner of thought and action, are characteristic of the people who inhabit this part of Galicia. And these characteristics, along with the minarets and still crescent-crowned domes of the churches, leave Tarnopol, in spite of its "Place Sobieski," and its varied Christianity, a distinctly Asiatic town.

At all the intervening small stations between the frontier and Tarnopol are the same dreary crowds of waiting peasants. It seems to be their doom to wait upon wind-swept, grey-walled platforms, huddled and hulking beside their heaped up belongings in filthy, stinking sheepskins. Patience, the patience of brute beasts, is written on their dull worn faces. Life seems to present no interest beyond that of watching whether the ever-hissing public *samovar* was fulfilling its duty, whilst they spat and chewed garlic. Slothfully, blinkingly they survey the passing of their more fortunate fellow creatures, apparently with no resentment, or any desire to arrive either at their ultimate destination or a more comfortable social status.

Crossing the country by such a deliberate train gives ample time to view the scenery. Many miserable villages are passed, one almost identical with the other, and none of them differ much from those of Western Russia. Both there and in Poland they consist of two rows of one-storied huts, built, in Russia, of wood logs or wattles, in Poland often of stone, plastered with mud. And between these rows of huts, which generally turn their gables to the village thoroughfare, runs the one street, if, indeed, a wide muddy space can be so designated! Each hut leans against the next, and each thatched roof overlaps its neighbour so that, in case of fire, all may surely burn together. In the larger villages stands a church, and before it is the common village pond where geese, ducks, pigs, and uncleanly babies wallow in supreme bliss, and where, also, the village washing is done, even in mid-winter, when the ice has to be broken and salted to enable the pinched, purple-fingered women to carry on their task.

Round this big duck pond grow high willows and poplars, and near by is the well, a towering Biblical, pictorial kind of erection,

worked by buckets on chains and a lever. And beyond every village is a dreadful spot which might be called a place of a skull. Krasinski, perhaps the greatest of her poets, has entitled Poland "The land of graves and crosses," and assuredly, among the most striking and depressing features of this part of the country, are its sad little earth-bank encircled cemeteries,* with their forlorn broken crosses that stand up gaunt and lofty against the sky line, proclaiming by their multitude the awful toll of life taken by the almost yearly cholera epidemics, when the peasants die like flies, victims of ignorance, poverty, and misgovernment. The crosses in these cemeteries are limited in number, and when one falls down from decay or storm the authorities do not permit its re-erection.

The huts of Russian villages are generally bedaubed a violent green, yellow, or blue. The Polish villages display more taste. The houses are sometimes whitewashed, and, when painted, display less barbaric colouring. Yet a drab appearance characterizes all country towns, in both lands, be the paint on the huts ever so gaudy.

If possible the byroads in Galicia leading to the country towns, and even the great highways, are worse than those in Russia. Extremely wide, they sink much below the level of the fields through which they pass. From these fields rivulets of water descend, and in spring and autumn, after torrential rains, the track ceases altogether to be a road and becomes a water-course or a quagmire deep in black, oily mud. Then, during winter, snow raises these roads up to an apparent level with the steppe, and over-venturesome wayfarers sometimes sink in breast deep, and not infrequently lose their lives. There are tales told of how people and animals have been engulfed in the black mire or snow, and their dead bodies have only been found months afterwards when the sun had caked the mud into solidity, and through the cracks the corpses became visible. And the baked ruts in summer, too, tend to render a Galician-Russian drive dangerous and painful, for they are apt to wrench the wheels off the vehicles and break the horses' legs. Road sickness, also, often overtakes strangers when they first travel on these highways, owing to the lurching and concussion.

An untidy litter of straw, hay and rubbish, and a great heap of manure are stacked close up to each hut. And this manure is, during summer, kneaded with earth into blocks, and baked hard in the sun, and constitutes the chief fuel of the villagers, who do not object to the rank and abominably smelling smoke which

* In the Carpathians the cemeteries are frequently pretty and well kept.

rises from it. This smoke, when carried on the wind, is sufficient to notify travellers that they are approaching a village, even if the yelping of the dogs, which are of the wolf tribe, and dangerously savage, did not loudly proclaim the fact. Seas of dark mire or clouds of dust are everywhere.

Within a village hut are two rooms, the "hot room" and the "cold room." In the first the entire family, generally several generations of them, eat, sleep and work; and in the other the family live stock is accommodated. At sunrise there emerges from the "cold" room a procession of, say, a pony, a couple of cows, several dogs—there are about two dogs for every person in Galicia—some curly-haired pigs, and much poultry.

In a typical "hot room," measuring about twelve feet wide by sixteen feet long, there are two pieces of furniture: a table and a narrow wooden bench. The peasants of Western and more prosperous Galicia sleep often on feather beds, but not so those in the eastern districts of the country, or in Western Russia, where this bench and the stove do duty as resting-places. The average stove is an enormous brick affair, reaching almost to the ceiling. From this stretches a shelf some seven feet broad, which forms the favourite and most commodious bed, whereon the important members of the household repose, leaving the bench which extends along the back and side walls to their less fortunate and less important relatives. The door of the stove is about a foot from the ground and opens into an enormous cave, into which the logs of wood and manure briquettes are pushed, lit, and left to burn while the stove door stands open. It is only when the fuel has been reduced to hot embers that the stove door and chimney are securely closed, so that the heat may be retained; and retained it undoubtedly is, red hot, for something like ten hours, and at a bearable warmth for another fourteen. It would be interesting to know how many peasants die yearly from stove suffocation; the number must be very great, as much carelessness is shown about shutting the stove doors before the fuel is consumed, even though this may mean dreadful nausea and death to those who drop off to sleep without first ascertaining that only smouldering embers are behind the iron door.

An *ikon*, or a crucifix, according to whether we are in Russia or in Poland, hangs near the entrance door of all village houses, and on passing it each crosses himself. A quaint picturesqueness redeems the interior of even the most squalid Russian or Eastern Polish huts. The glaring and thick oil colours with which the walls, tables, and benches are plastered soon become mellow from smoke. Neither windows nor doors are ever allowed to lie

open, fresh air is anathema to these peasants, and, during winter, when the stove is kept at red heat, no description could possibly do justice to the atmosphere. Dirt is everywhere in Eastern Galicia, and certain insects, which would drive a Western European distracted, are treated with silent Slavonic contempt, mixed with fatalism, which does not tend to diminish their numbers or aggressiveness. Over the indescribable atmosphere there always hovers the odour of *schee*, or of garlic-flavoured *barszcz*, broth made of beetroot. The former, a delicacy which is partaken of three times a day, is made of rotten cabbage, and on fast days it is cooked with oil! So penetrating is the smell of this delectable compound that it exudes from the breath, clothing, and even skin of its consumers.

The costumes of the peasants of these frontier provinces vary with nearly every village. The Slavs of the Russian-Galician borderland have fiercely contested their *droit de vivre* against many foes, and every foe has left some mark upon the faces, costumes, and customs of the present inhabitants. Here we find extraordinarily vivid and varied colours, especially scarlet with white, for scarlet and white are the national colours of the Poles.

In the districts round Trembówla and Tarnopol, physical beauty, the birthright of the Poles, is rather rare. In fact, the peasants are often ugly, having broad, flat, high cheek-boned Kalmuk faces, somewhat lowering in expression. They are taller and more heavily built than their compatriots in other districts, and their dress, though lacking nothing in brilliancy, is less gracefully worn, and displays less exquisite handiwork. Very unattractive, too, is the fashion they adopt with their hair, which is cut across their foreheads, and sticks out in a ragged shock round their heads, which, in the case of the women, are encircled by clumsy wooden rings covered with linen cloths. But this is the only district of really plain faces. It is a kind of No Man's Land, this far east of Galician Poland, and perhaps the breed has been "crossed" too often for beauty.

Galicia is mainly an agricultural country. And there is nothing to hinder it from becoming a rich country, for the soil is excellent. Nature has intended it to be a grain-producing land. But nothing more hopelessly primitive than its farming can be conceived in these days of practical and advanced agricultural methods. Though scientific agriculture is at last being taught in Russia, in Galicia such instruction appears to be neglected, or else, if such instruction be given the people do not apparently make use of it. Perhaps their poverty has something to say to this lack of progression, and it is said that the Jews

have gradually brought into bondage about two-thirds of the population through debts and mortgages.

The last century put an end to the Polish *Corvée*, or task work, and now the peasants, who are not possessed of small holdings of their own, but work on large estates, are paid by contract. Very little bad feeling exists between employer and labourer, unless the employer be an aggressive German (Austrian) or a Jew. Nevertheless, the spirit of democracy is creeping in even amongst the poor and ignorant toilers of Eastern Galicia and Western Russia, and their mode of speech and their behaviour—if not their methods of agriculture—are rapidly altering.

Every one, man, woman, and child, takes a share in the outdoor labour. And, speaking of Galician, indeed, of Slav women generally, it must be owned that their life is a terrible struggle from the day they first toddle from the village well with a bucket of water till the day they close their tired eyes in the crowded, comfortless, living room, and are dressed for their last and best sleep in the shroud which their toil-worn old fingers had commenced to weave when the great peace was felt to be approaching, and their weary bodies shrank from any more arduous employment than moving the loom shuttle slowly and gently to and fro.

Before marriage they have some of the pleasures of life, and they enjoy their little vanities like other women. But, after marriage, no more pretty compliments or small attentions come their way, and their days become one long grind.

The Slavs, however, as a race, respect women for their womanhood, and are never guilty of treating them as do the Germans in East Prussia and Silesia, where it is not uncommon to see them yoked with oxen or dogs to ploughs and carts. At the same time, it is thought fit that women should take an exactly equal share of outdoor labour, and, also see to the affairs of the household, whilst producing as many children as Nature chooses to send, and Nature, by the way, is remarkably generous in this respect where the Slavs are concerned. Sometimes a man will beat his wife, but the beating is seldom brutal, and he never hurls missiles at her or kicks her, for, if he did, the neighbours would make life decidedly disagreeable both for him and his relations, and his wife's family would assemble *en bloc* to horsewhip him. There are, indeed, few mean qualities about the Slav, for meanness his primitive generous nature abhors. So long as the wife's whipping is not too severe it would almost seem that she likes it, looks upon it as a sign of attention and of strength in her husband, whom she is unmodern enough to

regard as part of her own being. The following verse, given in rough translation, is often quoted by Polish women :—

"Love me true, and love me quick;
Pull my hair, and use the stick!"

But man's superiority is never lost sight of, and the Slav woman never disputes it. As a Polish proverb runs : "A man of straw is worth more than a woman of gold."

Boundless hospitality is one of the chief traits of the Slavonic disposition in every land, and the poorest hut on these plains will open its door to strangers for as long a time as they care to stay, and everything the owner possesses will be placed at their disposal. Thanks only embarrass these kindly folk, with whom to ask is to receive. And the last bite of their scanty fare will be placed before a guest with a courteous and dignified bow, and the wish that he "may enjoy a good appetite, and God's eternal assistance."

The lowest son of the soil, on passing a foreigner, or one of their own class, always raises his hat and says : *Nech bendie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus* (Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ !), to which he expects the reply : *Na wiek i wiekow!* (For ages and ages.)

The Poles are generally regarded as the Irish of the Slav race. And, like the Irish, to quote Gogol, the Slav humorist, they are "laughing a laugh under which are bitter tears." They never forget their national humiliation. On their faces is written a perpetual agony, and from their conversation, which is, as a rule, superficial when a stranger is present, one gathers the impression that there is something behind what is said which cannot openly be spoken, something which, for obvious reasons, it is best to ignore or hide. These Poles do not, however, forget ; they are waiting and watching for the sunrise.

Gradually the train makes slow progress out of barbarism—this particular frontier line is commonly regarded as the "back of beyond" by both Russians and Austrians—and winds its way into civilization. The villages become less wretched, the inhabitants look more prosperous. Neat little flower and vegetable gardens make their appearance between each of the village huts, which cease to be dependent upon one another for support, and stand up honestly minus the manure heaps, in coatings of nice clean whitewash; though, to be sure, the doors and windows are still bedaubed with paint, and with grotesque, though gay, geometrical designs and line borders. Brown woods fringe the horizon and cover some of the hills, and the extreme desolation noticeable on the steppes near the frontier is absent. It becomes

easier, also, to smile; life does not seem to weigh so heavily, and the costumes seen on the station platforms grow more and more wonderful. With the scenery and the villages the people also alter. Indeed, another class, hitherto unseen, make their appearance, namely, the *gorai*, or mountain folk. The highlanders and the lowlanders have little in common, except it be a native love of splendid colour. The steppe folk profess to despise their kindred who hail from the northern side of the Carpathian slopes. They will tell how mountaineers "must be fools, else, of a surety, they would not live in districts where they have to toil three times harder than the lowlanders for a most miserable living." The dwellers on the plains are utterly unable to find any loveliness in granite boulders, pine forests, and small, stony fields. Their taste is in vastness and a limitless horizon. And the Carpathian-born are, in their turn, equally assured of the idiocy of the natives of the steppes, who know nothing of the glory of snow-crowned mountain peaks, or the symphonies of dashing cataracts, of the rushing roar of avalanches, and the perfumes of larch and pine.

À chacun son goût!—and eyes that appreciate the beautiful will certainly not take long to perceive that the peasants grow handsomer the higher the altitude they dwell in, excepting, of course, the townspeople and aristocrats of Warsaw, Cracow, and Lwów, whose perfection of face and form cannot easily be rivalled.

Lower set and broader in stature, coarser of feature, the lowlanders seen *en route* between Tarnopol and Lemberg cannot compete physically with the tall, straight, lithe mountaineers, with their equally dark, but clearer skins, sleek, ebony hair, and haughty bearing. One young hill-man especially attracted attention by his great height, bodily strength, and energy. He was waiting amongst the tulip-tinted crowd at one of the little country stations. Clad in breeches of whitish buff woollen material, so tight as to show every line of his splendid, supple body, wearing a full, spotless, linen shirt, over which, in huzzar fashion, was slung a jaunty short coat decorated with scarlet and blue ribbons, and secured round the shoulders by a heavy brass clasp, on his shapely head a small, round, black felt hat adorned by a chain of blue and gold beads and a bunch of greenery, his feet encased in scarlet-laced moccasins, he presented a subject fit for a Meissonier's brush, and so proudly cold and stern was the expression of his young countenance that, involuntarily, he brought to memory Sienkiewicz's description of Sobieski's famous red dragoons as they stood to attention round the open coffin of "The Little Knight," Pan Michael, when

" yellow gleams from the tapers shone on the stern suffering faces of warriors, and were reflected in glittering points in the tears dropping down from their eyelids."

By the side of young Poland stood his sweetheart, wrapped round in a flaming rose and yellow shawl, underneath which a glimpse could be caught of her full and pretty figure firmly bodiced in embroidered green velvet. Under her wide, plaited, white linen skirt, which reached barely to the knee, her trim legs and feet emerged, shod in beautiful Hessian high-heeled boots of crimson leather stitched with yellow thread. Beads of every hue, long silver earrings, and a pink and orange kerchief headdress lent additional glory to her costume and brought out the transparent ivory-tinted pallor of her small oval face from which glowed a pair of long-lashed eyes, as darkly bright and mysterious as the waters of one of her Carpathian lakes.

They pile colour upon colour, contrast against contrast, these peasant artists. They understand well how to mix the colours on their palettes, for they have studied under Mother Nature, and realize that no colour really jars with another.

Hours might be spent and volumes written on the thousand and one costumes of the Slav races, but Lemberg (Lwów), the Galician commercial capital, has still to be described.

Lwów—to spell the name rightly—has come through many vicissitudes, and endured them in a more cheerful, more practical spirit than have the sister cities of the disrupted kingdom. Cracow has grown old, grey, sad and broken under humiliation, Warsaw has developed a kind of hysteria, but Lwów, which feels as deeply as either of them, set its teeth defiantly, and considered how best it could avenge itself on its bullies. The Poles are not commercial, they hate standing at the receipt of custom, they loathe bargaining. But Lwów knew that Austria had a similar aversion from haggling in the market places, and Lwów conquered its aristocratic Slavic pride and set steadily to work to fight for its interests in the only way possible—commercially.

So it comes about that, in spite of its ancient history, Lwów strikes visitors as a new city. It buzzes with life, it is wealthy, not apparently, but really. Its citizens have schooled themselves to be business-like. Lwów will lead in commerce the new Poland.

And yet, below all this brave demeanour there burns in the heart of the Galician city a furious hatred of Poland's oppressors. Go into the Ossolinski National Institute, in the Ossolinskigasse, and notice how every relic, every portrait, every manuscript which has to do with Polish history and Poland's heroes is cherished. Watch the faces of the citizens as they view these

things, speak with them discreetly, and know that nothing is forgotten or forgiven in Lwów any more than in Cracow, though, in Warsaw, forgiveness is going out towards Russia, the Slav Motherland.

There are three Archbishops and three cathedrals in Lwów—a Roman Catholic, an Armenian, and a United Greek Church, all differing in style. The first has a Gothic interior, the second is a good specimen of fifteenth-century Armenian, and the third, built on a height in the basilica form, is, perhaps, the finest of the three.

There are good hotels and well-appointed *cafés*. The Rathhaus boasts a tower two hundred and six feet in height. In the opera and theatre the best Polish and Italian music and the cleverest Polish plays can be heard. The shops are first class ; but, after seeing and hearing all these prosperous, modern, laudable things, involuntarily, and no doubt unprofitably, steps and thoughts turn towards the ancient places of Lwów, towards the monuments of a rude past, when life offered more excitement than the driving of a bargain. To a time when they travelled fastest who could seize the swiftest steed. To the day when the Ruthenians built Lwów as a fortress against the Tartars, who soon made short work of it, leaving it in ruins, to be rebuilt by Casimir the Great, the instructor of its citizens in the art of commerce. Under this ruler its merchants did business with the East. To the times when, again and again, through the centuries which followed, the brave townspeople were defeated and fell under the heel of cruel conquerors. Charles XII. raised his standard on its battered walls, so did the Magyar hordes, so did the Turks, so did the Cossacks, so did the Russians.

It was evening when the slow *droshky* was piled with luggage labelled "Cracow," when the last tip was laid on the last obsequious and, of course, German palm at the door of the Hôtel de France. The lights were lit in the shops and *cafés*, the billiard balls were beginning to click in the Restaurant Stadtmuller, and pale Polish faces were bent over the journals in the Theatre Café, the one spot in the city where the thick-skinned German-Austrian residents have been made to feel themselves intruders. The citizens were about to take their customary evening airing. Well-equipped carriages drove by towards the opera. Blue-coated Austrian officers were "doing promenade" in the streets, staring vacantly into the shop windows, and ogling the ladies, who, when they chanced to be good Poles, dropped their eyelids scornfully and coldly returned the white-gloved salutes. For though Austria has proved less ruthless towards the Polish nation than Russia or Germany, this very kindness is

at heart just as much resented as actual brutality ; for the Poles suspect—and rightly—that, by apparent kindness, Austria seeks to undermine their national spirit.

In one big house—one of the many Lwów mansions built in the sixteenth century, whose splendidly carved doorways and windows were set closely together in order to comply with the old law which forbade a building to occupy more than a certain frontage upon the street—the windows were open and music came floating upon the evening air. It was the home of a Polish aristocrat, and he was giving a party.

Even at the risk of missing the train—but that would have been really an achievement—the driver was bidden to halt. It was the national dance of a nation which has been robbed of everything national except this. Though out in the cold street, and shut off from the gay scene within, it was possible, through the magic of the music, to imagine everything—the wonderful figures of the *mazur*, the leaps into the air, the sidelong movements, the click of the heels, the flashing, defiant eyes of the dancers. The music grew quicker and quicker, more and more passionate, till it ended in a crash. There was a sudden buzz of excited voices, laughter, and the merry clinking of glasses. They were drinking *cherie Koblére*, a concoction made of sherry-brandy and spices, glasses of which are always circulated after the termination of each dance. And very intoxicating are both *cherie Koblére* and the *mazur !*

There was a short pause. Then the violins wailed out one of those weirdly sad, yet mocking, Polish melodies, the like of which can be heard nowhere beyond the Slavonic frontiers. Fiercely gay, restless, melancholy, mystic, rebellious, sensuous, sweet, it was full to overflowing with what Poles term the *Zal*. And for the word *Zal* there is no translation. So bewildering, so fascinating, was that melody that even the cries of the irate driver to hurry on were for a time unheeded.

But it was not possible to delay any longer. The whip curled and whistled. The horses threw up their heads, shook their bells and scarlet tassels, the driver, with an indignant bellow and one prolonged howl, bent his padded body, in its queer, brown cape, and his head in its astrakhan, beribboned cap, over the reins. The wheels jolted on the cobbles, the luggage lurched dangerously, and the music grew fainter and fainter till it was lost in the sounds of the city.

The moon shone brilliantly, and millions of stars made night clear as day on the high Gálician terrace-land which rises, ledge upon ledge, until the highest terrace merges into the lowest slopes of the Carpathians.

Between Lwów and Cracow there is leisure for thought and speculation. Time to remember the splendid past of this country, her unhappy present, a present which was to be followed by one more awful than could then be conceived—her hopeless revolutions, her struggles, her tragedies. Where is the land which can present more riddles, more paradoxes, more diversity of national character than Poland? With every turn of the wheels came another question. Why, for example, has Poland been the most liberal, and, at the same time, the most despotic of nations? How is it that, when England tortured Jews and heretics, Poland gave them shelter and protection? How is it that, with this free national spirit, she still has some of her people slaves? How is it that the Polish aristocrats are among the most cultured and polished class in Europe, while the Polish peasants, generally speaking, are illiterates? How is it that thousands upon thousands of Poland's sons have gladly gone to death for their motherland, when many others have sordidly sold their birthright? Has it been a lack of balance on the part of the Polish character that has brought Poland low? And how long will this land of sorrows, mistakes, and gallantry take to learn the great lessons which have come down to her through ages of torture and humiliation?

Just before this world's war there was absolutely nothing to show that Poland's fate was so soon to be decided. Nothing to show that the Great Black Eagle of Russia was so soon to strive for the defence and liberation of the poor White Eagle whose eyrie it had ruthlessly helped to desolate. Nothing to show that the sun which had sunk peacefully in the West would rise to-morrow in the East blood red.

In the little villages the windows were dark and the peasants were sleeping. From afar came the barking of dogs. Overhead there was nothing—nothing but the stars. And to-day even the stars are hidden from sight by the cloud of battle—of warfare more ghastly than the world has yet known. On these unhappy plains every village has been razed to the ground, and there is not wood enough to make another cross in this "The Land of Graves and Crosses." The wail of Ujejski's hymn seems to come up with the moaning steppe wind:—

"Our lamentations mount up to Thee, O Lord, with the smoke of fire and the stream of our brothers' blood!"

CHAPTER III

THE VIRGIN OF CZENSTOCHOWA : THE HEART OF POLAND

Some time ago a post-card could have been purchased in Berlin for ten pfennigs which bore the inscription : "The famous picture of the Virgin and Child captured from Czenstochowa by our gallant army." At the top of the card was a portrait of the Kaiser, surmounted by the Imperial Crown of Germany. As we look on this card we can realize the anguish of the Polish peasant who has made pilgrimage to this "the Holy Place" of Poland.

Let us picture Czenstochowa on the occasion of one of these pilgrimages. Every one who has travelled in Russia or in any Slav country knows what a pilgrimage means to these people, with their vivid imaginations, their deep religious feelings, their idealism. Hundreds, even thousands, of miles will they travel to visit a "Holy Place." You see them coming in troops, whether it be to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, to the Troïska Monastery near Moscow, or to the Shrine of Czenstochowa.

As a rule Czenstochowa awakes late, but not so on the morning of a pilgrimage. Then there is no sleep for any of the inhabitants. Let us see it on a winter morning with a great pilgrimage arriving to visit the shrine of Poland's Virgin and Child. The streets are thronged, the snow has been trodden into marble solidity, and the dirty town—for in spite of its sacredness Czenstochowa is undoubtedly one of the most dingy and unkempt places in Russian Poland—sparkles in the chilly sunshine. Cross-crowned spires and copper-capped turrets float fairy-like against the pale azure of the sky. From all sorts of sheltered nooks and crannies where they have passed the night, cowering under their shaggy sheepskins, country folk and Jews, *droshky* drivers and stall-keepers creep leisurely forth to meet whatever fortune the day has in store for them. All along the side-walks, here as everywhere else in Slav land, little booths and stalls have been set up presided over by black kaftaned Jews, long-nosed, bilious complexioned, and unsavoury. The shops of Czenstochowa leave much to be desired, but the pilgrims will find most things

they require on these ramshackle stalls. But it is well to bear in mind that the piety of the Polish peasants—never to mention that of the Jews—does not interfere with their trading morals, so far as petty theft and sharp practices are concerned. The merchandise heaped about is surely varied. Poppy-seed cakes, peasant laces, sweet cracknels, fruit pastiles, undressed skins, earthenware, ironmongery, cheeses, bottles of peppermint water, black bread, boiled buckwheat groats, jars of pickled cucumbers, dried fish—of abominable odour—eggs, sour cabbage, diminutive Christmas trees—some unadorned and pretty, others hideously decorated with tinsel and pink paper, big red, white, blue, and green paper roses—huge bowls of sour and sweet cream, shivering birds in cages, tiny red parrots brought from Finland, finches, and thrushes, brightly coloured wooden toys, webs of linen, boneless purple slabs of horse flesh, tawdry jewellery, old books, second-hand and odoriferous clothing, marvellous and very beautiful peasant costumes, long black and scarlet be-tasselled boots, carpets, cotton gloves and stockings, local embroideries, inlaid steel ornaments, leather work, and many other things of varied interest, for all of which, however, purchasers were to be found. I was once told by a Transvaal storekeeper as I stood by while he sold yards of gay-coloured ribbons to some half-naked Kaffir women at Bond Street prices, "civilization is mainly wants and I supply them." Evidently a Polish pilgrimage has, according to this expert, a very civilizing tendency.

Around one of the large canvas booths a violent squabble has arisen. The sites of these larger booths are drawn for by lot by a chosen number of poor widows of the town, and woe betide any intruder who ventures to encroach within the limits of the sites thus allotted! A superabundant Jewess is shrilly proclaiming that she has been robbed. With one stout arm she clutches the thief, a miserable little underfed, damp-nosed peasant boy, the proof of whose guilt, a round, pink sugared ginger cake, bearing the damning marks of teeth not afraid to bite, lies on the snow for all to see. Here and there along the thoroughfares coke fires are crackling merrily in iron braziers, and round these, groups of country people are gathered exchanging gossip and smoking. In all the protected corners and spaces of the arcades are small tables given over to the sale of sacred images, nauseous pictures of bland virgins, insipid Saviours, crucifixes, rosaries, cruciform brooches and such like. Tiny shrine lamps, all ready for the pilgrimage, flicker in the bitter draught. At regular intervals down every street big public *samovars* are hissing and spluttering, and half-frozen country people are sipping boiling tea and warming their blue fingers

on their nickel-encircled glasses. Restaurants and cafés are filled with the more opulent breakfasters, with chatter and tobacco fumes. In rows on the curbs are disgusting beggars, with bandaged arms and legs. The restless streams of humanity which pass and re-pass are extraordinarily interesting. All classes and people from far separated provinces jostle together. Tall, amiable looking, well bred Russian officers, in smartly cut overcoats and round lamb-skin caps; more officers in circular and all-enveloping cape-coats, these coats padded with eiderdown, trimmed with golden sable, lined with silk, with dangling, unused sleeves, the whole of such ampleness that their wearers' progress is considerably hampered by the entanglement of swords and spurs in the cloth. Then there are civilians in dark coats, or capes, and high beaver hats; soldiers, immense fellows, seemingly impervious to the weather, for their overcoats swing by a strap from their necks, unworn. Only for their ears do the Russian "Tommies" appear to have any consideration, and these are protected by bandages of red or black cloth, which suggest the affliction of perpetual earache. Ladies of the upper and middle classes trip by as lightly as galoshes and long coats permit, their fur and wadded headcoverings, mouths and noses swathed in fleecy white shawls, their black eyes—the only part of their faces visible—sparkling coquettishly. Threading their brilliant way through the more sombrely clad populace come the peasants. Like giant flowers of every hue and shade are these countrywomen of Russian Poland—blue petticoated, red jacketed, white petticoated, green bloused—most of them snug, so far as the upper portions of their persons are concerned, in short sheepskins or in great shawls which glow and flame and flutter in the wind. Full skirts, reaching barely to their knees, sway and billow above high Hessian boots of black or scarlet leather. Ivory tinted cheeks—the hall mark of Poland's beautiful women—in contrast to smooth raven black hair, eyes dark as night, and a background afforded by orange or crimson kerchiefs give the impression of so many exquisite living cameos. They are desirable when young, these Polish girls; but age, hard work, and much childbearing leave them old at thirty, and by the time they are sixty—well—look at that ancient hag, squatting there on the curb, yellow-skinned, shrivelled, toothless, horrible, her acute beady black eyes, which dart from face to face suspiciously, the only human feature she possesses. She has come quite a hundred miles on foot, though some fellow-travellers no doubt gave her "lifts" at intervals—to present her last petition to the Little Virgin and her Son. Leaning languidly against a wall is a young married woman. Her wedding day—the only joyful, careless

day in a girl's life here—dawned and set nine months ago. Her parents drew the little hand in chalk on the door of her childhood's home scarcely a year gone by, to indicate that their daughter had arrived at marriageable age, and, as she was pretty then, though so white and worn now, the settlement of her future was arranged within a few weeks. She, too, has come to this shrine of Czenstochowa to beg that the child she is expecting may prove a son. Her husband, a big, raw-boned, good-natured boy, is opening their bundle. In it is a wedge of rye bread, a piece of bacon fat; and the nearest *samovar* will provide tea. Think of it! This ailing girl-child of seventeen has come to where she stands from a village ninety miles away as the crow flies across the plains, in a springless, seatless cart, over roads indescribably bad, exposed to a temperature many degrees below zero, embittered by the cutting north wind so dreaded by Polish travellers. Let us hope that the gentle Little Mother of Czenstochowa looked with kindness on this girl, of whose trouble she herself had once experience. Did the Little Virgin grant a son, or did she take both mother and child away from this sorry land, away from her dreary mud hut on the steppe, from her filthy village with its melancholy willows, its fever-haunted swamps, from the horror which stalks to-day over all this tortured, blood-drenched country?

Soon the traffic becomes more lively. Sleighs and *droshkies* flash swiftly past, drawn, as their owners' means allow, either by fine trotters or thin, hairy ponies. Wheels and sleigh rollers make but a slight noise on the hard, frozen slush. However, the jangling of the bells on the high, red tasselled yokes encircling the horses' heads, the dull pounding of the hoofs, and the weird howls of the drivers warn the unwary to move out of danger. Some of the sleighs, those belonging to the farmers, are primitive in the extreme: rude, wooden affairs, crudely painted, the occupants of which are obliged to keep a fast clutch on the ragged ropes, which do duty for side doors; in order to prevent themselves being jerked out on to the road. Other sleighs are veritable works of art, bright with brass be-set harness, studded with steel plaques, decorated with blue and scarlet rosettes, with painted panels of artistic design. One group of loiterers is especially worthy of attention. They are Cossacks of impressive proportions, with massive round heads, short, bustling hair, beetling eyebrows, and straggling moustaches, who look defiant, but on a closer acquaintance, prove to be by no means churlish or brutal; indeed, quite the reverse. Though the day is still young many people have already imbibed a considerable amount of alcohol, for the weather is colder than usual, even for inclement

Poland, and a night in the open makes a comforting drink desirable, which, when taken on empty stomachs, intoxicates, and that quickly. They drink hard, these Poles, and what wonder ?

Round " the Holy Place "—the small church which enshrines the relic which is revered by the Eastern and the Western faith alike—round the home of what is believed to be the oldest picture existing in the Christian world, a surging crowd has already collected. But the church doors are still shut. Backwards and forwards sway the multitude, patiently obedient to the police who are endeavouring to preserve some sort of order. A thousand tired, eager faces are lifted to watch for the swinging back of the barriers. Some of the women faint and are hoisted over the shoulders of the crowd into safety.

Boom—boom—bo—o—m. Soft, rich, full of sonorous sweetness, the great bell of Czenstochowa tolls out its welcome, and at its tolling every head is uncovered, and the sacred sign is made by thousands of fluttering hands.

Then very slowly the heavy doors unclose, and the entire throng bows to the ground. Aristocrats, officers, tradespeople, peasants, bend side by side. For through the dusky gloom of the interior can be seen the glittering rows of the tall wax candles which burn perpetually before the heavy silver and gold embroidered curtain veiling " the Heart of the Heart of Poland."

The organ breathes out a few chords as very quietly, three or four abreast, the pilgrims enter the building. And, when every square foot of the church is occupied, the doors fall to again, and those without must await their turn for admittance.

Most churches have their prominent characteristics, but it would be difficult to define exactly what is the chief characteristic of this tiny chapel of Czenstochowa. Its proportions are so small and yet so perfect. The tone of its colouring so soft and yet so resplendent. Like a deep whisper growing ever fuller and clearer, like the far-off murmur of the sea, the music swells out, and a mysterious Slavonic chant soars up towards the lofty rose and sapphire windows, up higher still into the golden mists of the roof. Such music ! It seems to carry with it, as does the ocean, the whole awful burden of humanity ; it seems to be composed of the cries and wailings and prayers of centuries worn and beaten in tears and lamentations. It is the questioning of generations upon generations of pale existences seeking still to discover the why and the wherefore of their being the call of suffering creation to its God.

And the door through which the simple hearts and untaught minds of these poor Polish people hope to pass into the presence of Him whom no man hath seen, or can see, is the jewelled

frame of the little picture of human love which hangs here behind this silver and golden curtain. Out, and up, and over all rises the glorious and now triumphant chanting. Sobs and choking sighs bear it company. Passionate, tear-filled Slav eyes are fixed on the high altar, now dimly seen through silvery clouds of incense smoke. Amongst the scarcely breathing throng there is a sudden movement, a ripple of intense excitement, then absolute stillness, for the music ceases. A tiny bell tinkles. The heavy curtains part asunder, and the picture becomes visible.

Just at first nothing can be seen but a small, almost black square set in a splendid frame of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, topazes, and pearls, with a background as of beaten gold.

Only a little square, black and battered by age! But as one looks more intently the shadowy countenances of a soft-faced Byzantine Virgin and Child seem to emerge, clear and awe-filling.

This poor picture of Love, how old it is! Not beautiful, the only intrinsic value and loveliness it possesses borrowed from its surroundings, and from the simple faith which seeks to adorn and adore the Ideal it so feebly strives to represent. This dingy painting is plainly the work of an artist more gifted with religious fervour than with genius. It might very well be the crude effort of the physician, St. Luke, whom tradition declares to be the artist. In the second century—so the story goes—it was in Jerusalem, whence it was taken to Constantinople, and from there, several centuries later, it was conveyed to Kieff, to be finally deposited in its present resting place. During the period of the Tartar raids, in the twelfth century, it almost met with destruction. On the faded painted faces of Mother and Child may be seen the scars of the desecrating Mongol arrows, scars which the credulous assert will never be obliterated till Poland regains her freedom. In the Swedish war, when Czenstochowa was invested, as a last resort the citizens carried the picture through the streets, and out on the ramparts, to encourage the troops, whereupon, as the story goes, a glory descended upon the town, and after a twelve months' siege the invaders were forced to retire, discomfited. These are only a few of the extraordinary tales—wonder tales—which have been woven round this Polish relic.

Only for five minutes are these weary, affectionate pilgrims permitted to gaze at their treasure, to do honour to which they have tramped so many leagues in snow and wind. Then the curtain descends and again the organ peals out—"*Eleison! Kyrie Eleison!—Christe Eleison!*"—the sopranos, clear and angelic; the basses, solid and grand, as only Slavonic basses can be. An

ecstasy of sound; then silence once more. The doors re-open. A flood of light streams in, searching out the brilliant tints in the clothing of the peasants as they rise and clatter out, as gently as their heavy footgear permits, making way for another batch of worshippers to enter.

So they come and go, as the curtain rises and falls, and the hearts of those simple, credulous, unquestioning people are made happy.

This portrait of the Virgin and Child formed part of the Polish loot of the Kaiser of Germany, and post-card copies of "The Heart of the Heart of Poland" were sold in Berlin for a penny!

Czenstochowa stands to the south-west of Russian Poland just over the frontier, within striking distance of the German army of invasion. And, knowing the veneration with which the Poles regard this church and picture, the Germans circulated, through secret agents, a statement to the effect that this Virgin and Child had appeared to the Kaiser in a vision, and with tears commanded him to rescue their Shrine from the Russians. He then informed the Poles that such was his intention, and advised them in forcible terms to render him whatever assistance he might require. Amongst the many bribes he offered for Polish support were money and many rare jewels and fresh decorations —in German taste—for the shrine.

But the Poles tore this proclamation into shreds, and the Kaiser promptly received a reply stating that he might betake himself and his money to the Devil from whom both he and it had come, for "neither we, the people of Poland, nor our religion are for sale."

Furious at this answer, when the German Army arrived in Czenstochowa the usual atrocities and outrages were perpetrated. The church was desecrated and its picture was wrenched from its frame and dispatched to Germany. And, finally, to the dazed horror of the citizens and all Poles, a vulgar portrait of the Kaiser in uniform was raised above the dismantled altar, lights were placed before it, and the wretched people were daily driven in by the brutal German soldiers to kneel before the picture of the man whom they regard as the Devil incarnate. Presumably the Kaiser thought by this means to terrorize the Poles. They regarded their Virgin and Child as all-powerful, he would prove to them that he was stronger. But he little understood the Slavonic character. This incident, by which he hoped to cow a spirited people into subjection, has undoubtedly caused the Poles to stiffen their backs, and has had the result of bringing Polish Catholics and the followers of the Russian Orthodox faith to a

better understanding. The relic is revered by Poles and Russians equally, and by insulting the Shrine of Czenstochowa the Kaiser has merely managed to insult both peoples and both religions.

Probably the most remarkable result of the present awful conflict in Russian Poland, and in fact throughout the whole of the dismembered Kingdom, is the quickening of Slavonic racial sentiment. This sentiment has been quietly developing for the last few years, in proportion as the peasant class has become more emancipated and better educated. Little by little, under Russian rule, which is not nearly so black as it has been painted, great industrial and commercial centres have sprung to life; Polish exports have increased, and Polish as well as Russian schools and colleges have greatly improved. The old policy and methods of repression exist no longer. The time has passed when Russian Poles were forbidden to wear their national costume or sing their national songs. Only one song—the national hymn of Poland—was tabooed of late years, and since the war the singing of this is not only permitted but actually encouraged. Russia long since recognized the fact—which Germany has failed to do—that it is utterly impossible to assimilate Poland. Russia herself has found her Slavonic soul since, something over one hundred years ago, she set to work to crush the same Slavonic soul out of Poland. For years both countries have been victims of their own individualism. And now, through the blood-red smoke of war, in which both suffer together, they are catching glimpses of the road which will lead them victoriously out of this agony to true racial Imperialism. Poles never failed of late to remark that the scattered Slav races must, within the near future, combine together to resist Teutonic aggression. Russia is the Slav country possessed of the vastest wealth, of power incalculable, of the greatest population—no less than one hundred and seventy millions—and she has given proof within late years that she means to change the policy which was really the invention of the German Bureaucrats that governed her for a century. Accordingly Polish leaders now acknowledge, some grudgingly, some frankly, that Poles and Russians, belonging to one race, speaking one tongue, must stand together in defence of a common nationality. Even before the outbreak of hostilities the Poles had tacitly ranged themselves alongside Russia against Teutonic aggression, which they were much too intelligent a people not to know was as much Poland's business to combat as it was Russia's.

Then came the crash, and above the turmoil rang out trumpet-clear the Czar's proclamation of universal Slav liberty, and the restoration of the Kingdom of Poland. And a hurricane of racial recognition, gratitude and love swept through every Polish

heart for the quiet Emperor, the first of his house to shake off the obnoxious Prussian influence, the first of his house to greet the oppressed and scattered Slav peoples—whether in Poland, in Bosnia, in Serbia, whether within or without his dominions, as brothers and fellow soldiers in arms against the same foe.

"Even if the Emperor had not made this proclamation," declared one of the Polish Nationalist members of the Duma, "we Poles would have stood beside our Russian kinsmen. But this proclamation has given us strength and hope. For we know now that our national desire is, at last, to be realized, which desire is not opposed to Russian Imperialism, but in favour of it. For, as a free Slav nation, Poland will stand on Russia's western frontier, a strong bulwark against the Teuton."

The feeling of the Poles to-day towards Russia is well expressed in the words of another prominent Polish Nationalist, formerly a bitter opponent of all things Russian. "This war will mean the resurrection of the whole Slavonic world. Russia may, after all, prove herself the deliverer and avenger of the subjected Slavs. It is insolent and ignorant of Germany and Austria-Hungary to suggest that they will find an ally in Poland against Russia. The hour of Slavonic freedom and justice has struck. The weaker and submerged Slav nations and peoples are to-day ready to endure anything rather than, jointly with German foreigners, lift up their hands against their brother Slavs, and against France, Poland's former friend. So let the politicians in Berlin and Vienna understand that, in our opinion, a war against Russia means a struggle against the liberty of the Slavs of the West as well as against the Slavs of the East. Better Muscovite any day than Teutonic supremacy."

Russian is still the language of instruction in nearly all of the Warsaw schools. Of late the severity with which it was enforced upon the pupils, and the antagonism which it met with, has almost vanished. This has not, however, been the case in German Poland, where the bitterness existing between the Prussian rulers and the Slav ruled has been steadily on the increase.

Picture the state of this country since the war deluge burst over it. The atrocities perpetrated by the Germans in Belgium and France were mild compared with those which they committed in Poland. Picture this land, always melancholy, desolate, and poor, given over to the destroyer. Across its steppes, parched by the scorching summer sun, the dust is blowing up before a hot wind in choking clouds. And realize, if possible, that this dust, which covers everything with a grey mantle, is the dust of that which was living humanity last year; the dust of thousands upon thousands of half-buried corpses. Borne

upon the stifling breeze comes an awful, almost insupportable stench of death. Here and there dotted over the wilderness are miserable villages, consisting, as everywhere throughout Poland, of two parallel rows of thatched hovels, separated by a track, now inches deep in powdery dust, in winter ankle high in oily mire. It is well to remember what these villages look like, for it seems probable that but few of them will survive the tempest of destruction which has burst upon the country. Wooden gates and high wooden fences separate these hovels from the so-called road. The always-present village ponds have dried up and become merely holes of sticky, evil-smelling mud. Flies infest everything, carrying poison and fever to the living from the dead. The surrounding fields are untilled, for the wretched people have no heart to cultivate land which to-morrow may be swarming with "the devils in grey." * The manure heaps, which are stacked by the side of every hovel, fizzle and reek in the white sunlight.

Picture one village in particular, which is, after all, only one of many that have met the same fate. Groups of the frightened inhabitants are clustered in the road between the two rows of tumble-down houses. Some still make a pretence at carrying on their simple occupations, but the greater number are too stunned to indulge in any activity. The heat is oppressive and sickness is rife. Many new crosses rear themselves up over there in the cemetery, where the freshly-made graves are all small. For pestilence takes the children first. The faces of those who remain are haggard, sallow, ghastly. Up in the small white-washed church at the end of the village street the old priest is about to say vespers and his people kneel around him. Only the rustling of the wind through the willows and amongst the shivering poplars, the crying of the wild fowl on the mist-obscured marshes, the lowing of the untended cattle on the fields, the shuffling of feet, and the whining voice of the old priest disturb the ominous silence. Dusk falls, and then the night; and on the wings of night rides up the storm so long expected. A light—not of the moon—angers the sky above the dark belt of pine forest fringing the low horizon. Then a great burst of flame rushes up into the silver-dusted heavens, followed by a second flame, and by a third. And from very far off comes the rumble of thunder—not altogether like thunder, for it never ceases, and seems to gather strength till, with an awful crash, it shakes the very earth. The whole sky is now crimson. Now come wild shrieks. Doors open, and every hovel disgorges its

* The name given by the Poles to the Germans.

inmates. Mothers grasp their babies, old people one another, the girls stand mute—paralysed—for they have heard of the fate which befell their sisters in Kielce, in Krzepice, in Turek, in Sieradz. And redder still blazes the horizon, nearer rumbles the thunder of the cannon. "To the Church!" cries some one, and, like a covey of terrified birds, women, old people, children—there are no able-bodied men left in the place—rush towards their poor sanctuary. But what use to pray? God has forgotten them as He forgot the innocent in Kielce, in Sieradz. What use to pray when "the grey devils" have taken down their Little Virgin from her shrine and desecrated Poland's "Holy Place"?

They will pray no more, neither will they attempt to escape, for the plains are infested with the devils.

They will do as the bravest Polish folk do. They will fire their village and destroy themselves. Better death than dishonour and outrage. And the thunder roars nearer.

Each family enters its hovel and every door is closed. Half an hour: and then, from beneath the dilapidated wooden doorways, from under the overhanging thatch of the weed-grown roofs, through the one-paned windows, hungry, fiery tongues of flame shoot out, curl up, and ripple on. Black volumes of smoke vomit from the chimneys, through every crevice. Another quarter of an hour—Polish hovels are old and dry—and this village has gone like the rest, and those who inhabited it have joined their neighbours—eternal witnesses against the "devils in grey"—the Kaiser's Missionaries of Kultur.*

* During the German invasion of Poland the villagers have resorted to burning themselves alive in their homes rather than fall into German hands.

In the Valley of the Narenta : Bosnia—Herzegovina.

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CHAPTER IV

POLISH MEMORIES

"RUSSIAN Retreat in Poland—Desperate Fighting on the Eastern Front." Out in the streets London pursues its normal self-complacent way. Entering a restaurant, one of a group, as they seat themselves, ventures a remark that Poland is now entirely in the hands of the enemy. Hearing the observation, a swift flash of passionate, burning fury gleams for an instant in the tragic, dark eyes of a girl at the next table. Then the lids fall and the young face becomes still, colourless as marble. A year ago she had a home where the corn-fields are rich, and the forests are dense enough to afford a last shelter to wild bison. Her father was a Polish nobleman, a prominent and wealthy member of the *Szlachta*,* a class not to be confused with the aristocracy. The past tense, when referring to both home and parentage, is used because to-day neither the one nor the other exist, both having been swept away in the awful flood of war which has desolated Poland.

It was a fair land where this girl once lived—a land rapidly growing pleasanter and fairer under the influence of industry

* There are two and distinct classes of Polish nobility—the aristocracy and the gentry. The aristocrats possess titles in addition to their letters of nobility—*i.e.*, coat of arms, rights, etc. The gentry—the *Szlachta* (nobility)—have been recruited from the upper middle class. For example, after the defence of Vienna John Sobieski ennobled *all his cavalry*. Even in the nineteenth century whole regiments were ennobled. There are over 130,000 noble families to-day in Poland. Many rich merchants or industrial masters save money in order to retire from business, at middle age, and gratify their national longing to become landed proprietors by purchasing an estate; on this they settle down, employ labour, help to educate the peasants, and quietly make use of their time and fortunes to hasten the day which all Polish patriots hope for—the day of Poland's freedom. The *Szlachta* are the backbone of the Polish people. They are well off, but money to them is only a means to an end—a lever with which to strike a blow for their national liberty. The aristocrats proper of Poland are possessed of no inborn inclination to the civic virtues. Their ideal is that of the aristocracy of pre-revolutionary France. They have an aversion from all that is practical; and are, as a rule, steeped in debt, indolent and epicurean. But the *Szlachta* is growing in power, and with them lies the ambition, strength, wealth, education, and future of Poland.

and a more brotherly understanding between Poles and Russians. And though death now strides beside its quiet rivers and through its forest glades, it is still a pleasant memory. Recall—as this poor girl refugee does—a picture of it as it was when the war came.

The weather has been perfect and the harvest is ripe. Broken only by the dark belt of the forest, a slow-moving little river, and four wide, straight white roads bordered by poplars, the great plains roll far away like a heaving ocean into the blue distance. If it were not for the sombre forest the scene would perhaps be too brilliant. There are vast fields of maize so tall that a man standing six foot high finds their yellow, tasselled heads on a level with his own. They wave gently in the summer breeze, while every now and then across their golden beauty fleecy clouds cast soft, blue, scurrying shadows. On the undulating green *toloka* * herds of cattle graze, and the tinkling of a hundred sheep and cow bells, with an occasional cry of a herd boy, rises through the air. The fields, ditches, roadsides, the river banks—fringed so thickly with hedges of silver-grey willows—are aglow with wild flowers, wild flowers so bright, so lovely, as can only blossom in Poland, the land of passion and of vivid life. Purple and golden irises, pansies—blue and creamy white as the crest of a wave—a wilderness of marguerites, pink-tipped meadow rue, campanulas, lilies, dog roses, fiercely scarlet poppies, cornflowers, wine-tinted tares, chicory, dazzle and delight. Their perfume under the almost visible heat soothes the senses into a somnolence that is neither sleep nor waking. All is peace. Away over yonder, down the more open pathways of the great forest, the trees throw an emerald, sun-flecked shade on the deep moss carpet, on regal ferns, bee-orchids, clumps of Solomon seals, and wild strawberry beds. Even now, in the splendour of a Polish summer, the branches moan overhead, and the loneliness is so oppressive as to awaken awe. Further in, along the green aisles, the growth is too dense for the sunlight to filter through, the moss gives place to fallen pine needles, wild life rules supreme, and there it were wiser not to venture unarmed—there are graves in the village cemetery occupied by victims of Tsigane robbers. No sound of human existence penetrates the stillness, only the gentle rustling of the leaves and the timid movings of shy, untamed creatures: green and sun-spotted lizards, sorrel-hued frogs, sleepy, innocent snakes, while only the flitting of birds disturbs the brooding silence. *Can* this be the country of which the Polish patriot has said,

* Pasture land of short, crisp, green grass.

" Wring a clod of earth in your hands anywhere in all our lands, and blood drips out " ? It seems impossible !

A mile and a half to the rear lies the village. The houses, standing in two rows facing the dusty road, are built of wood, and most of them are thatched with straw. But two or three boast log roofs, a sign of their owners' affluence. Moreover, there is only one crudely be-daubed dwelling—a fact the villagers never fail to point out, because it signifies that there is but one Jewish family in the place. Most of the cottages have a quaint, gaily coloured pattern painted round their entrances, and about one in every three displays earthenware pots of geraniums on the window-sills, clumps of rue in the tiny fenced-in garden and a hand roughly outlined in red or blur chalk on the door, indicating that a daughter of the house is ready for marriage. There is here none of the squalor and misery so frequently noticeable in other Polish districts. Near by, flocks of fat geese, important and loquacious, browse in the company of black, curly-haired, portly pigs, and hob-nob with the children who cluster round the village pond weaving, as beauty-loving Slavs are wont to do, wreaths of wild flowers in their towsled hair.

It is a Saturday afternoon, and every one is finishing his or her week's work. A group of women, with petticoats hitched high above their shapely brown legs, are washing clothes in a second pool, close by the gallows-like well. Crimson, pink, yellow, and white—the warm colours of their garments flash gaily in the sunshine. Some men, clad in yellowish frieze breeches and short, white linen tunics girthed about the waist with a foot-wide red leather belt, are rattling homeward in their *bryczka*,* drawn by a troop of wiry, honey-tinted ponies whose

* A *bryczka* is a big wooden, springless cart, possessing four wheels. There is a box in front for the driver and planks behind for the other occupants. Wealthier people place pads on these planks and furs on the boarded floor of the cart. But the peasants are content with straw and sit higgledy-piggledy on the planks and bottom of the conveyance. There is a curious custom in Poland amongst both the nobles and the peasants. One family will arrange to pay a visit to another family. As distances are great, they make an early start, and, *en route*, call to pick up members of other families. As many as twenty people will thus be collected, and together they will arrive at their destination. The family thus honoured will rush out with truly Slavonic hospitality to welcome their unexpected and numerous guests, who settle down on their hosts for the night, crowding the household they visit out of rooms and beds. But such inundations of visitors are taken as a matter of course, and as the stores kept in Polish country houses are great, no inconvenience is felt, except overcrowding. In this way social life is kept up. Such visitations are called " Tartar raids "—a name which recalls the period in Polish history when the Tartars in tremendous hordes overran the country. The size and commodiousness both of country houses and *bryczkas* may be imagined, seeing that they are large enough to accommodate over a score of travellers.

coats shine like spun silk. Joyous smiles, a fleeting glimpse of sun-bronzed, merry faces framed in round, dark hats gay with poppy wreaths, appear and vanish as the cart and its occupants proceed in a whirlwind of white dust towards the next village eight kilometres away.

The villagers are scattered at this hour. Men and boys are out on the fields, shepherds are rounding up their flocks on the gentle uplands. Only the black kaftan-clad Jew, who resides in the ugly, blue-painted house, and amasses a small fortune by smuggling diseased swine across the frontier, by dispensing bad spirits, lending money to needy peasants, and by other similar industries, is snoozing among his progeny on the threshold of their residence. To-day is their Sabbath, to-morrow will be the Christian Polish Sunday.

To-morrow the sun will shine even more brightly ; to-morrow the girls will come out resplendent, prayer-book and lace handkerchief in hand, their pretty heads swathed in spotless linen, wearing their wonderful, dazzling shawls or sleeveless, embroidered sheepskins, coral and blue bead necklaces, clean chemisettes, and knee-high, glossy footgear. And the men will don their best black or blue homespun breeches,* shining top-boots, scarlet, silver-bedecked waistcoats, their jaunty little hats wound round with blue and white shells, beads, and ribbons, their dashing huzzar jackets fastened at the throat by silver clasps. To-morrow the bell in the little wooden church, whose spire rises in the distance, will ring, and all who have legs and health will go to church, for where is the Pole who forgets to pray to the good God on Sunday ? They will gaze in reverent admiration, like little children, at the big crucifix set aloft above the altar screen, with its gaudy pictures of unwholesomely complexioned saints and angels. The chancel candles in the six-foot-high green earthenware candlesticks will splutter and drop lumps of brown wax on to the heads of the school children, who, with plump hands full of nosegays and green branches, will squat in a row upon the altar steps and behave themselves only because they know from past experience that if they prove obstreperous an uncomfortable afternoon will have to be passed sitting, without the intervention of breeches or petticoats, on stools of repentance made out of prickly maize heads.

And as the incense floats up blue and perfumed, as the air becomes heavy with the odour of perspiring, exuberant humanity, of well-oiled hair and woolly *Kiptars*,† a sleepy devotion will creep over the worshippers and cause them to vow vows swiftly

* Here breeches are wide and coloured, not tight and white, as in Galicia.
† Sheepskin jackets.

to be forgotten, and they will imagine for just a little while that they long to die and go to live in heaven with impossible saints and angels such as simper on the sacred screen. But in reality, down deep in their pagan, beauty-loving, passionate Slav souls, they adore this world and God because He created it very good and very pleasant. Then the young girls will come round in procession bearing lighted tapers, little cross-barred wooden crucifixes, and wooden alms bowls, and every one will kiss the crucifixes and bowls and give according as their emotions have been stirred. Then the congregation will shuffle into the sunshine, and as many as can will seat themselves on the long blue and green wooden benches which encircle the outer walls of the church. The girls will pull off their stiff, smart boots and set free their slim, sunburnt limbs, preparatory to tramping home on bare feet, and the boys will flirt and chaff with them, while staider married folk exchange gossip and discuss crops and, being Poles, of course politics.

This is a thrifty village, consequently its Sunday dinners are substantial. Every one, except the Jew in his blue house, will eat pork—*Kolesha*—mixed with sweet milk, the universal Slavonic dish of fermented and horribly smelling cabbage, and —despite constant and urgent Government warnings in connection with cholera—plenty of ripe, unripe, and over-ripe fruit, washed down by a few precautionary glasses of vodka. The two rooms which comprise the accommodation of the ordinary Polish peasant's house : whitewashed rooms with roughly carved chests, a couple of deep alcoves, each containing its gigantic wooden bed piled with gorgeous coloured rugs and immense feather-stuffed pillows, filled with collections of pottery, copper and earthen cooking utensils and sacred pictures, with an overpowering reek of goat, geese, sour cheeses, cabbage, and humanity—these rooms will be deserted in favour of the clean, pure air. Before each door, under the shade of chestnut and fragrant acacia trees, the tables will be set. And later, when their elders have slid into sleep after having partaken of much food and drink, the younger generation will stroll off towards the inn courtyard, where the dark-skinned Tsiganes are already tuning their fiddles and tapping their zithers. Then the feet will fly. Spangled aprons, necklaces of blue and silver beads, long, gay ribbons floating from glossy hair plaits, short white skirts, high red and black boots, crimson, orange, and azure jackets, peacock feathers and flowers in the men's hats, tiny, tinkling silver and brass bells on the girls' embroideries and boots, all will eddy and unite into a glowing, sparkling whole, as the dancers sway and swirl their lissom, muscular bodies in time to the wild music. And they

will fling back their heads and lift their voices in strange old pagan songs, and dance, dance until the sun has set in a red ball of fire, till the flickering oil lamps have been lit and gone out again in the inn kitchen, till the old folk have clambered up the little bed ladders and snuggled down into the unhealthy feather beds of their ancestors, till the white moon has sailed off on the opal sky, till the winking stars have twinkled themselves tired, till the cocks have crowed themselves hoarse on the barn doors, till the first grey of morning streaks the east. Only then will the final passion-mad notes of the Tsigane song die with a wail into silence on the quiet breast of another day.

And the earliest sunbeams will laugh into faces fresh—even after such a night's revelry—as themselves; into boy faces straight-featured, dark eyes, with black or blond hair cut across the forehead as in a Velasquez portrait; into girl faces pale and red-lipped. And the birds will sing, and the company will troop away to begin another week's toil—for life and the good earth call. With handshakes, kissing, shouting, and, perchance, a gabbled prayer, they will part where the four roads meet under the shadow of the great wayside Cross with its tall, slender pole holding up a brightly painted birchwood shrine, inside of which is a roughly carved crucifix guarded from above by wooden figures of the Dove, God the Father, two hovering angels, and St. Peter's cock, and adored from beneath by other figures—the Blessed Virgin and St. Mary Magdalene, at the feet of which lie the scourge, crown of thorns, spear, nails, and sponge, half hidden by wilted rosemary posies placed there by faithful hands—in remembrance.

It is a memory more pleasing than some Polish memories. These are people evidently happy and healthy; they are on the fair way to becoming wealthy, and wealth means power. Who and what has been the means of bringing this about? Who has taught and helped these folk to adopt the practical, and yet retain all the idealism for which thousands upon thousands, generations upon generations of their nation have gone gladly to death and exile? Who has caused them to perceive that this ideal—an ideal purely spiritualistic and in direct opposition to the Germanic ideal which has blighted and terrorized their dear Poland, which has dominated and given a false and evil reputation to Russian rule in the ancient Kingdom, which has too long set Slav against Slav, brother against brother, can best be maintained by the furtherance of silent, patient industry, and strengthened by common sense? Who has taught these peasants that not only their only battle for national independence, but also the larger battle for the liberation of their Russian kinsfolk,

must be fought by means of commerce, discipline, and tireless labour ? Who has assisted them to realize their strength, that strength which Bismarck always felt was but dormant in the Poland lying agonized beneath his heel ? Who has led the Polish advance against Germany thus described in the *National Zeitung* some years ago : " Irresistibly, like a Juggernaut car, the Slavonic element rolls onward ; step by step it conquers the towns and villages of the Prussian East . . . a quiet, noiseless, political and social conquest of those regions. . . . Whenever the place of a lawyer or of a chemist is free, the Pole steps into it ; whenever a piece of land in town or country is for sale, Polish money is offered for it, and this money streams into the country from secret sources which seem to be simply inexhaustible. The Pole stays, the German goes ; that is the wretched Polish question in a nutshell." Who has educated the Poles to recognize in the true Russia their friend, relative, and, maybe, future liberator, and to discover in the " Russian " bureaucrats the secret agents of hated Prussia ? Who has accomplished this stupendous task ? Leaving the women at their week-end washing, the children playing on the green, the Jewish family dozing, take the road leading out of the village. Ten minutes' walk brings into view a tall birchwood gateway emblazoned with a coat of arms. This gateway opens into a chestnut and acacia avenue, where, under the shade of the trees, nestles an unpretentious, one-storied, white stucco house. A green-painted wooden verandah, grass-green shuttered windows, a glass porch filled with flowers, lend to its colourless walls perhaps a touch of frivolity. Before the porch, in the centre of the drive, and beneath the verandah, are beds of standard roses, carnations, stocks, mignonette, and sweet peas.

This is the country residence of the estate proprietor. And the secret of modern Poland's industrial and agricultural progress may perhaps be discovered in the work carried on by such as he living amongst the people.

Forty odd years ago this gentleman commenced life in Warsaw as a humble linen merchant, and proved successful. Little by little he built up a fine business and fortune. Then he founded a factory which brought employment to thousands of his compatriots. For his services as a public benefactor he was ennobled, permitted to become a member of the *Szlachta*, which honour did not, however, bring him a title, but merely the right to display a pedigree and coat of arms. Though an ardent patriot and Nationalist, he stands high in Imperial Russia's favour. For the big, lazy, placid Motherland knows, encourages, and is, indeed, at heart immensely proud of the new-born industrial

Slav spirit which has arisen in Poland. No iron regulations, such as exist in the Germanic part of the ancient kingdom, no spying Government officials are permitted to retard its progress. Undeterred by Teutonic intrigue, diabolically planned Teutonic strikes, and Teutonic-poisoned "Russian" bureaucrats, Poland's industrial campaign proceeds and succeeds. Severe laws are severe only in the letter, and are scarcely ever put into operation. Whereas the Polish industries subject to German rule are deliberately prevented from becoming rivals of German and Austrian factories, these in Russian Poland receive their chief support from their kindly, if loudly growling, "Oppressor." The Muscovite Bear's growl is much worse than its hug, and the quick-witted Poles, grasping this fact, realize that Poland's day is about to dawn, not in blood and revolution, but in peace and goodwill. A subject people have become indispensable to their rulers. The hour has practically struck when, free from bitterness, with ancient wrongs relegated to oblivion, they can dictate terms which naturally must be generous, seeing that both the old and the new conquerors have grown needful each to each.

In the van of Polish industry marches a leader more useful than any of those bygone heroic, chivalrous, brilliant, pomp-loving, volatile, blue-blooded, oft-defeated Polish knights, who lived so recklessly and died so gallantly on every European battlefield. Not content with having converted one poor village into a thriving business centre, this proprietor is about to found yet another factory on his estate, and the site is already laid out.

All days are filled by work, but with the *Szlachta*, as with the peasantry, Saturday is the busiest. At five this morning the silver samovar was hissing and the rye bread and honey were laid in the landowner's dining-room, and five-thirty found the master, his wife, and daughters at their daily tasks. Where is the luxury, thriftlessness, and degeneracy so universally attributed to the Polish nobility? Amongst the ancient aristocratic circles it may be met with, but seldom amongst the *Szlachta*. Almost everything in this household is of home growth and manufacture—wine, cordials, smoked hams, pickles, bread, jams, bottled fruit, cheese, butter, preserved vegetables, homespun linen and wool, clothing, embroidery, bedding, and carved furniture. Servants swarm—the women bare-legged to the knee and brightly clothed, the men in livery with the crest of the house engraved on their shining silver buttons—and, if wild and irresponsible, they are faithful and affectionate *friends*, rather than servitors to their employers. They never complain, and give of their best because, like the peasantry, they find their masters human beings such as themselves whom they may address at ease, whom at all

hours they may greet in a tone of cheerful equality. The footman talks at table and offers *entrées* or cigarettes with the air of a grandee. The maids criticize the dress or appearance of the ladies when handing round coffee in the saloon, remarking perhaps to a visitor: "Oh! what a pretty colour is the noble madame's hat; it becomes her admirably; it pleases me greatly!" A noble lady in Poland has just those pretty distinctions of race and tradition that please and do not offend. She is too simple, too democratic to condescend. Her inferiors are entitled to the same courtesy as her equals, and she has not the slightest objection to pay them in full the measure of consideration which they tacitly claim.

During the forenoon, while the master is seeing to his business, his womenfolk are employed indoors. In the spacious blue-and-pink-tiled kitchen, to the usual deafening accompaniment of chatter and clatter, everything, from *pâtés*, *ragoûts*, jellies, and *macédoines*, down to black bread and odoriferous cabbage soup, is cooking, under the *châtelaine's* supervision. At the back of the premises, in a tiny dispensary, the eldest daughter, who has taken her degree in medicine, is soothing the pains and aches of a crowd of peasants. A younger sister is helping the maids with the dusting of the bedrooms, and what fresh, quaint places are these country-house rooms, made to suit a people whose hospitality is immense, made for a people who live as one family, who, where a visit is concerned, do not worry about the amount of accommodation and privacy they may be able to give or receive, who, in fact, have never lost their primitive racial instinct for the patriarchal, communal mode of existence! There are no stairs, no passages, no bathrooms here, and no sanitary conveniences indoors. One airy room opens into the next, and so on, the distinction between sitting-rooms and bedrooms is by no means hard and fast, and toilet accessories have a droll fashion of drifting into living apartments. Things costly and rare are scattered about in curious contrast to things of small value. On rough, wooden, muslin-covered dressing-tables stand four-foot-high solid silver mirrors. Invaluable old Sèvres china, wonderful silver, and enamels are displayed on coarse home-spun linen table cloths. Yet all is artistic, for all is good and free from vulgarity.

Late afternoon brings leisure. Every door and window stands open to the scented air. Laughing, high-pitched yet sweet, Polish servant voices summon to coffee. Suddenly, in the hall decorated with stags' heads, hunting crops, knives, whips, skins, and guns, a tremendous commotion occurs. A four-wheeled *bryczka*, full up and brimming over with guests, is seen driving

up the avenue. Without a moment's hesitation the entire family and household rush out, screaming and clapping hands, in delighted welcome. It is "a Tartar raid." The *bryczka* disgorges a score of persons, of course come to stay the night. But home stores are limitless here, the women will sleep five or six in a room, and the men will double up in the saloons or in the dry, clean out-houses.

Every one talks at once, every one laughs at once. Whisking their scarlet, blue, and white petticoats about their naked legs, jangling their necklaces, showing dazzling teeth in smiles, adding to the uproar by vivacious cries of "*Dobrej nocz*," half a dozen maids arrange the coffee table on the verandah. Dainty olive, anchovy, or caviare sandwiches, tiny glasses of vodka, rose preserve spread between flaky pastry, dark-hued bread, sheep milk cheeses, golden tea, as hot as the boiling water in the indispensable samovar can make it, and cigarettes are there, while the babble of conversation never ceases, growing more vociferous, more animated. Every face is alert, merry, vivid. Then the party separates for tennis, a stroll in the woods, or a visit to the factory. Towards dusk, horses are brought round, and as many as like gallop off across the *toloka* or into the forest.

The gloaming fades into the brief twilight, the twilight deepens into the sapphire night. A tired-looking procession is seen slowly wending its way across the *toloka*. It is one of the innumerable Gipsy (Tsigane) bands. It is commandeered by the riding party, brought back to the house, and, after a good supper, is brought into the great saloon, where the floor has been cleared for dancing. In a few minutes, loud and fierce rings out a Polish *Mazur*. It is the wail of a many-century-hunted race to a race which has also suffered. In this mocking, illusive Tsigane music, in the indomitable defiance and beauty of this Polish dance, live the souls of two persecuted but virile races.

The blossom-sweet night breeze floats in through the open windows; outside, a crowd of country folk and domestics are giggling, beating time to the wild rhythm, and dancing.

"*Del o del Bakk!*" *

There is a strange, mocking note in the familiar greeting. Who spoke it? One of the Egyptians.† An old hag who crouches just within the lights of the windows. Her piercing black eyes and hawk-like features might have been conceived in ancient Assyria half a century of centuries ago. She is a famous witch—*bori chovihani*. It will be wise to cross her

* The Romany for "Good luck to you!"
† The Tsiganes are called Egyptians.

palm. But she has vanished—fled—like one possessed, as if in terror of *something*—of what? Is not all well? But no one laughs, for she is a *bori chovihani!*

* * * * * *

The autumn wind soughs through the naked forest and across the stubble fields. The plain rolls dark to the edge of the earth. A misty, chilly rain is falling. There is a stagnation upon all things, as though an unseen, mysterious force were compelling life to stillness. Even the cranes by the river have ceased their melancholy crying. Nature lies smitten. Some objects blacker than the night are flying up from the south-west. A whirl of strong, heavy wings, and a great flight of ravens sweeps past, keeping low and moving swiftly towards the north-east.

Door after door in the village is cautiously opened, pale faces, seen like ghostly grey blurs through the darkness, peer out, and voices whisper across the silence.

"What is it?"

"It is the ravens, little ones; we must fly. Within a week the stench of death will arise hereabouts. See, the vultures are also on the wing." *

But the villagers have property; they are prosperous people and value their household goods, and they tarry over-long endeavouring to save them. Cockcrow finds them still loading their carts, and dawn sees the Uhlans in possession. The screams of the people rise above the crackling of the raging flames, the falling walls and roofs, above the shouts of the fiends who stand in a ring about the place that was once a happy village. Their bayonets render escape impossible, and the fire is hungry.

Sobbingly, the old, old national song of the Nation of Many Sorrows rises, at first softly, then louder and higher, higher than belching flames and suffocating smoke can reach, further than the Kaiser's armies can march, up to the ear of Him to Whom vengeance belongeth.

Perchance, after all, their good fortune has not altogether deserted them; perhaps even the fiery death is preferable to flight—to that hideous Polish exodus that drifted shelterless, starving, wolf-beset, devil-hunted, maddened, across the solitude

* The peasants in the Polish war zone leave a district when a flight of ravens and vultures appears without apparent reason: the people believing that the arrival of these birds invariably precedes the coming of death. Mickiewicz, in his poem, "Faris," describes such a flight of vultures and ravens:—"The vultures shriek and threaten with shining claws. 'We scent,' they croak, 'the smell of death. Where are the foolish who seek rest here—here where soon there will be only death—where soon we alone will reign?'"

of a howling wilderness to escape from the civilization of the German. Old, young, the sick, mothers with new-born infants at the breast—they must go on—on—till exhaustion or the enemy give them rest.

In the preface to Cherbuliez's *Ladislaus Bolski* the question is asked : " Is Poland an ideal or a reality ? "

The spiritual Poland cannot die, but it is now the only Poland existing. But to the nations who have loved and value the spiritual Poland falls the task of bringing back once more to life and liberty the material Poland.

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The newsboys continue to sell papers. The men at the adjoining restaurant table continue to discuss the military situation on the Eastern front. The dark-eyed, white-faced girl rises quietly to pay her bill at the cash desk. For a few minutes she had been dreaming of her old home under the chestnuts and acacias, of the beauty of the roses and their fragrance, of the merry, dancing peasants : then the dream becomes a nightmare, a vision of hell, and she awakes to the recollection that she, a daughter of the proud *Szlachta*, is an orphan, sisterless, brotherless, homeless, penniless, dependent on the miserable pittance she earns by teaching the alphabet in a Jewish family in a drab London suburb.

* * * * * *

" Thou Whose eternally just hand has so often crushed the empty pride, and the powerful of the earth, in spite of the enemy vilely murdering and oppressing, do Thou breathe, even in this our darkest hour, hope into every broken Polish breast.

" At Thy altar we raise our prayer.
Deign to restore us, O Lord,
Our Country ! "

Thus Poland's Litany, the Litany of the Captivity, goes up through the murk of the careless city from the heart of this girl exile.

CHAPTER V

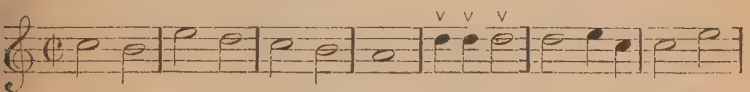
AMONG THE CZECHS OF BOHEMIA

Bayreuth and Karlsbad have been left behind. All around stretches a strange country, a country of lofty mountains, green woods, wide well-tilled fields, quiet lakes and rivers. As the train rushes on its way towards Prague, there is ample time to allow one's mind to travel back through the long centuries and to follow up the great history of the Czech people. There are cities whose history can be ignored, but Prague is not one of these. Every stone of its grey old walls has a story to tell, a tale to whisper of racial and national gallantry, of war and tumult, of murder and sudden death, of treachery and honour, of romance and progress. Far back into the dim shadowy past must one's thoughts journey, back to the days when the forefathers of its present inhabitants, under Boemus, spread their tents for the first time on these verdant pastures and hillsides and gave their new home the name Bohemia. They had come a long way, these ancient Czechs and wandered homeless for many weary centuries before finding rest for their feet. From beneath the ruined tower of Babel—so legend goes—across the plains and mountains into Europe, they journeyed on and on till they reached this hill-locked land of plenty. Other tribes had found the country pleasant, other races and other chieftains had tended their flocks and built their mud dwellings here previous to their arrival. Celtic kings had held High Court in Bubienum.* Marbod and his Markomans had ruled in the city called Marobudum, on the very spot where, in later years, the Czech Slavs founded their present capital. Some historians maintain that the Jews traded with the early Celtic inhabitants, and certainly there is evidence to show that the Chosen People were established in Bohemia thirteen hundred years ago. But, like all the Slavonic tribes who took part in the great racial trek, the Czechs were a peaceable, gentle community of shepherds and agriculturists, not given to warfare and seeking only a placid and a free life. One characteristic, however, they possessed which was somewhat

* Bubienum, the old capital of the early Celtic inhabitants of Bohemia, is supposed to have stood on the site of the modern village of Bubenetz, close to the present city of Prague.

lacking in their kinsfolk the Croats, the Serbs, the Slovenes, the Slovaks, the Poles and the Russians ; they were good organizers. No sooner had they brought their trek to a close, and settled down permanently, than they set to work to establish law and order within their borders. From amongst them they chose a just man, named Krok, to be successor to the mighty lord Samo. Krok was elected more in the capacity of lawmaker and judge than king, and he gave to his people many excellent laws. Now this Krok had three fair daughters, by name Kasha, Theka and Libussa. Kasha was a teacher of the Czech religion, whatever that may have been in those obscure times ; Theka was an apothecary and knew all about herbs and cures, and the tribe flocked to her from every quarter that she might heal them of their sicknesses ; but beautiful Libussa, the youngest, "the Cornheaded, Golden Hearted Child," was a prophetess. In comparison with her, Krok was as a babe in wisdom. Even his clear judgment and high authority could not conceive and enforce laws as just as those which Libussa thought out and established. So it came about that, on Krok's death, Libussa was chosen to be queen of Bohemia, and as queen she reigned wisely and splendidly. But her subjects desired an heir to the throne, and so one fine spring day, when the country was smiling, just as it does to-day, a certain ploughboy, called Přemysl, who was toiling in the fields behind his oxen, beheld a company of Libussa's bodyguard riding down the brown furrows towards him. They bore a strange message from the young queen. They came to tell him that she had cast her "dark fringed" eyes upon him, Přemysl, the poor ploughboy, that she found him "comely," and sent to him greetings and an invitation to share her Crown and Kingdom. So Přemysl unyoked his team, washed his hands and face, and started for the palace with the messengers. Next day, with great pomp, he wedded his sovereign and so became the father of Bohemia's first royal house. Years sped away, and Libussa, "the Cornheaded, Golden Hearted Child," with Přemysl, her ploughboy consort, made still better laws and founded the Golden City of Prague, on the hill above the broad Moldau. But as the centuries came and passed the peaceable Czechs gradually and reluctantly discovered that the tranquillity they loved and sought for could not be theirs so long as the bellicose Teutonic hordes pressed upon their frontiers. From the torment of the German aggression and treachery they could not escape. Struggle as they might, little by little their racial enemies contrived to undermine their national liberty, their laws, and their language. Almost had these brave Slavs sunk under the alien yoke, almost had their proud racial spirit been broken,

almost had their beautiful language been obliterated, almost had Bohemia vanished for ever from amongst the nations when, in a little town called Husinec, which lies half hidden under a range of pine-clad hills in a flowery green valley, there was born a man. On the door of a square solid old house can be seen to-day the inscription—"Mistr Jan Hus, 1369." And on the wall of the stone-flagged kitchen of this dwelling hangs a picture representing a tall man with a thin white face standing before a great council of princes, soldiers and judges. Over the picture is suspended the ensign of Bohemia, and in a book, which lies open on the table below, is this line of music—



On the picture is inscribed the name Jan Huss, Patriot, and to these seven bars of music is attached the signature of Antonin Dvořak, the famous Czech composer.

Who was this Jan Huss ? Ask ordinary Catholic churchmen and they will answer—a heretic. Ask ordinary Protestants and they will reply—a Protestant.

And both ordinary Catholics and ordinary Protestants give a false reply.

Jan Huss belonged to no particular religious party.* *He stood alone.* And what he stood for was Liberty—racial, national, and personal liberty, and the responsibility of the individual conscience. He had two foes, one spiritual, the other material. His spiritual foe was the intolerance which the Church of his day —his own Church—encouraged. And his material enemy was the German Empire, that sought to tear from his countrymen their national liberty, their ancient laws, their kingdom, and their language.

That a man's conscience is his own, and that each man is individually responsible for his thoughts and actions, this Jan Huss maintained ; and it was not a teaching which suited the Holy Germanic Power. That Bohemia belonged to the Bohemians and not to the Teutons, this Jan Huss proclaimed, and this truth was still more unpalatable to the Kaiser Sigismund.

So, after being given safe conduct by his German enemies to go to Constance, he was seized by them and burnt at the stake.

Jan Huss died, and his work lives after him. His life was

* Huss died a Catholic, seeing he held to the tenets of the Catholic Faith regarding Transubstantiation and the adoration of the Virgin. But he claimed the right to investigate the Scriptures, and he claimed the right of free thought. And for thus claiming he was condemned to death.

consistent, but his death was greater and more powerful than his life. He died for humanity's freedom, for Slav freedom, for Bohemia's freedom; he died because he willed liberty and would not utter a lie, and the flames that consumed his body lit up and carried on to after ages the gospel of racial, national and individual independence. The terrible and long-drawn-out Hussite wars that followed, as the direct result of his death, were waged *not* against Catholicism, but against slavery and absolutism. *They were waged by the Slavonic spirit against the Germanic spirit.* Ziska, the Czech Hussite leader, inspired in the Teutons—as was remarked at the time—"such a horror of heretics"—that is, patriots—"that they refused to meet them in the open field." As Virginio Gayda expresses it, "If one seeks in the depths of Czech National Socialism, one finds, in truth, the same spirit which throbs through the whole history of the rise and fall of the Czech nation, which has moved and incited the Czech aristocracy and *bourgeoisie* to rebellion, and has been the inspiration of Czech poetry; an ardent dream of liberty and of national independence, and enthusiastic insurrection against the Germans. It is the spirit of John Huss. . . . It is a conscious revolt, with a clear sense of nationality and its historic mission." *

A Catholic in his religious belief, a Protestant in his assertion of the rights of humanity against principalities and powers, Jan Huss was overborne but not conquered, killed but not silenced. Five hundred years after his death the Czech Catholic majority and the Czech Protestant minority are united as free men and patriots in venerating and defending his memory.

In the Liber Decanorum Facultatis Philosophiæ of the Prague University, wherein, through the centuries, the name of each graduate is entered by himself, stands the autograph of the great Bohemian Truthteller. He inscribes himself *Johannes de Hussynis;* and in another hand are appended to it the words, "*Sanctissimus Christi Martyr et verus Boemus.*"

* * * * * *

Set in a landscape as amiable and docile as it is possible to imagine, the city of the Czech starts up as if in defiance of its mild surroundings. There is a latent fierceness, an austerity and stubbornness in the straight lines and sharp angles of its architecture, something eagerly inquiring and passionately progressive in its innumerable spires, something almost crude in the red glow of its high "tent" roofs, something frigid in the green coolness of its parks, that faithfully depicts the Czech character. It is the capital of a people who, when they have an object to achieve,

* "Modern Austria," by Virginio Gayda, p. 335.

take the most direct road to its achievement; of a people who speak little and do much; of a people who, naturally peaceable, have always been at war with circumstance, at war with injustice and falsehood; it is the citadel of a people born to conquer through suffering.

On the lovely summer noontide of the year of grace 1914, its hoary greyness, its warm crimsons and pleasant greenness—these are the dominant notes of colour in Prague—are seen to advantage. As one enters the city by the splendid old thirteenth-century gateway of the Powder Tower, with its historic coats of arms, and takes the way leading into the famous Ring, the virile life and atmosphere of the place suddenly makes itself felt. Over to the left a big market is humming and buzzing with activity, but it is an activity more deliberate and calmer than is found in most of the market places in other Slav lands. Multitudes are bargaining and chaffering, yet the voices and arguments are restrained, the gestures quiet, and there seems none of the aimless, easy-going drifting to and fro that is so noticeable, say, in the Croatian, or even in the Polish business centres. But however restrained and quiet Czech gestures and voices may be, like all Slavs, they manifest neither of these qualities in their garments. It is the gayest crowd imaginable so far as clothing is concerned. Every district in Bohemia has its distinctive dress, and many and beautiful are the costumes to be met with in the Prague markets. Here are men in rich black velvet jackets and short full scarlet petticoats, other men in close-fitting breeches, white vests, embroidered with curious flower designs, high shining Hessian boots and round astrakhan, jauntily-plumed caps. Here are girls, too, resplendent in flaring head kerchiefs, purple or russet-brown dresses, half hidden by orange or green lace-edged aprons—neither dress nor apron reaching below the wearer's knees, thus affording a pleasing view of plump legs clad in red-and-white ringed stockings. There are other damsels in trim blue bodices, lilac or poppy hued skirts, black head-dresses and brilliant hosiery. The wares exposed for sale are infinite, but the West has somehow stolen from them the Oriental brilliancy that renders the merchandise displayed on the Galician, Russian, Serbian and Bosnian stalls so attractive and agreeable to the eye. There are the same exquisite Slav embroideries, however, and the pottery, in grace of form and colouring, is a joy and delight; nevertheless here, too, is a certain amount of restraint and quietness.

The narrow little arcaded streets lying between the Powder Tower and the Ring are very ancient, and the whole of the original city was formerly compressed into this quarter which

is called the Old Town. These queer, mysterious, fantastic houses belong to mediæval days. These courtyards and by-ways once formed the backgrounds of forgotten romances and tragedies, crimes and intrigues. The air is warm and fresh, and there are no malodours, for the drainage, even in the old city, is excellent. The buildings are dreamy, but the crowds that hurry through them, the people who go in and come out of the quaint gloomy doorways are extremely wide awake. Street vendors of all kinds swarm, and flower girls thrust their nosegays into one's hand. First impressions are always those which linger longest, and one's first impression of Prague is that it is a city of extraordinary contrasts. Nothing comes gradually here, everything strikes the thing next to it. Past and present, the dead and the living, light and shade, stand out one against the other in sharp challenge. Over there in the market the sunshine laughs, here all is in shadow and not a glimmer of gold is to be seen anywhere except in the hair of a girl who is leaning over one of the crumbling old balconies. She is a Czech girl, that is certain. And in her, also, can be noticed the same curious contradictions as are visible in her surroundings. Fair haired, yet black of eye, ivory-skinned, yet red-lipped, languid in movement, yet agile and strong, she represents the purest type of Czech beauty. That the type is as ancient as the Czech nation itself is shown in the writings of the earliest Bohemian chroniclers who describe Libussa as "corn-headed" and with "darkly fringed" eyes.

The grand Ring, despite the fact that the wide, densely thronged boulevards radiating from it are as modern, as broad, and as airy as those of Paris, is still reminiscent of the Middle Ages. Nothing can drive away its mighty memories. On one side of the huge circus stands the Teyn Church, through the doors of which multitudes, in ages gone by, flocked to hear the Hussite preachers; and on the other side is the Town Hall with its chapel, and the turret from which the weird clock, with its moving figures and pictures, still strikes the hours in the old Czech fashion of one to twenty-four, exactly as it did more than four hundred years ago. In the centre of the great space rises the gigantic new statue of Bohemia's most gallant patriot—"God's Witness—Jan Huss." The statue is still shrouded for it has not been yet unveiled, but, through the linen wrappings, as through the mists of time, it is possible to distinguish the tall spare figure and clear-cut features of the man who did so much to sow the seed of freedom and national liberty, not only in his own land, but in all the other Slavonic lands which suffered and still suffer oppression. It is typical of the Czech character that this statue has been erected. Though the vast majority of the

Bohemians are Catholics they venerate Huss as a Saint. Broad minded, intellectual, progressive and passionately patriotic, these Slavs know nothing of bigotry. They look back through the centuries from the heights of culture and freedom which they have reached, and see plainly that when they were as sheep without a shepherd, hunted by their traditional enemies, Huss arose and pointed out to them the hard and stony mountain path which they must climb to achieve that which they desired, and which they are now on the high road to obtain. They honestly assert that but for the stern lesson he taught them they would to-day be a submerged people, robbed of their Nationalism, their language, their liberty. And it speaks volumes in their favour that they honour the name of him to whom they owe so much.

Not that a statue was needed to keep in memory the work which the great patriot accomplished. Prague as it is to-day is his memorial.

Look around. Where are the signs of Teutonic rule? As one traverses the streets not a word of German can be seen or heard. Every signpost, advertisement, even the very tram tickets are printed in the Czech language, an old and difficult language bristling with accents like a hedgehog's quills, and made up of unpronounceable words: a language hard for a stranger to master, but nevertheless, the language for the salvation of which Huss came to blows with the Kaiser of the Holy Roman Empire! Very jealous are the Czechs of their Mother tongue! Note, too, the names over the doors of the shops, the banks, the factories, the restaurants. They are all Bohemian, not German names, for the racial foe is rapidly being driven from the seats of custom in the city and in the country. Wonderful indeed, has been the resurrection of the Czech nation. Crushed for ages beneath the weight of the absolutist and centralist Teutonic Empire at Vienna, it has, at last, sprung brilliantly and strongly to life. The strange, hidden, subconscious force which, even in its darkest hours, the Bohemian race never lost, "is now"—to quote again Virginio Gayda—"refined by education, rendered conscious by intuition, urging Czechs from the workshops and the fields towards the conquest of national rights. This is the human truth which destroys the colourless, dead theory. This is the real, quivering nationalist movement."

One feels this new life and strength and national hope in the very atmosphere. Watch the traffic, watch the people. Here is no sham, no struggle to keep up appearances under false pretensions. This is the capital of a people who have succeeded.

The Moldau divides the city into two parts, a division that,

in former times, often divided the town against itself—one religion, one ruler holding this side against another faith, another government, on the opposite bank. On the right side lies the Old Town and the New Town, and at the farthest extremity of the latter rises the great fortress-crowned rock of the Vissehrad. On the left and opposite bank stands the Little Town and the rival hill of the Hradshin. In the Old Town are situated the University, the Archbishopric, the Municipality, the principal churches, the chief theatres and the finest shops, also the Jewish Ghetto. And in the Little Town are situated the residences and gardens of the great Czech nobles, the royal Palace, and, set aloft upon the summit of the Hradshin, is the glorious Metropolitan Cathedral, dedicated to St. Vitus. Like a golden chain joining the separated portions of the city together is the wonderful Carl's Bridge, or, as the Czechs calls it, the Karlův Most.

Leave the Old Town and ascend the slope leading to the bridge, pass under the ancient and splendid high-roofed tower of the gateway with its brightly coloured armorial shields and statues, and pause a few moments in order to drink in the full beauty of the scene and to note the character of the people who hurry to and fro across the river. No imitative phlegmatic Teutonic genius could have conceived anything so fantastically lovely, so original, as this Karlův Most. From the foundations of its sixteen arches up to the glittering haloed heads of its stone-hewn guard of Saints, Angels, and Patriots it is absolutely Slavonic. Pure Slav, too, are the faces seen in the crowd. Here all the busy life of the city seems to concentrate, and, as it has been said, it is a life full of nervous activity and vivacity utterly dissimilar to German life. The chimes from a hundred steeples have just sounded noon, and the shops and factories on either side of the stream are vomiting out their workers. Gaily clad peasant folk, after refreshing themselves in the little wine and beer gardens, are rumbling countrywards on their empty carts. The magic hour of dinner is at hand, and dinner in Prague, when the weather is fine, is never eaten between four stifling walls. In all the pretty *café* and restaurant gardens, on the balconies of the big modern houses, overlooking the fine clean boulevards and avenues, in the old shadowy, cobble paved courtyards, tables are being set, and the clatter of knives and forks and the appetising odour of cooking announce that work is about to cease for an hour or more. Half the citizens have made up their minds to dine on the left bank, half are intent upon refreshing themselves on the right bank and consequently the traffic is somewhat congested. Beneath his golden spiked crown the patron Saint of Prague, St. John Nepomuc, who has borrowed the face of Jan Huss, gazes

down benignantly at the hungry, prosperous, bustling multitude, and the hurrying sparkling waters rippling below his pedestal. There is a brass cross let into the stone parapet just under the saint's big stone nose, and, as they pass this cross most of the pedestrians lay a hand on it, for here, tradition declares, the Patron of the City was thrown into the river and floated away into paradise—or elsewhere—wearing a halo of five bright stars.

The Czechs understand the art of living. They are artists and fully appreciate everything that is excellent, whether it be a well-served dinner or a well-painted picture. Like the Parisians they possess, too, the ability to go into detail. And even in the humblest eating houses one can be sure of a good meal.

Turn again towards the Old Town and enter one of the restaurant gardens frequented by the middle class. There may be much that is ancient, much that recalls the past, much that entices to reverie in Prague, but here, at any rate, all is fresh, and clean. The acacia trees are tossing their newly opened creamy blossoms overhead and casting a delicate tracery of flickering shadows on the many tables. The birds twitter in the branches. Beyond the walls sound the clang and rattle of electric trams, the buzz of motors, the clatter-clatter of horses' hoofs, the hum of the thriving city. The neat wooden chairs are painted a cheerful green and the table cloths are really white, and the expression on the faces of both waiters and waited upon is one of serene contentment. Attendants bustle here, there and everywhere, each man bearing half a dozen "commands" on either arm, indifferent to possible, but not probable, disaster. For disaster seldom overtakes that which the modern Czech sets himself to carry through, whether it be a dozen savoury messes in a restaurant garden or an important financial or political enterprise. Self-assurance, self-reliance, these are the keynotes of the national character, the secret of Czech success. Before taking a place at one of these little tables one must try to grasp the fact that, within the memory of those still living, these people were almost as ruthlessly oppressed as are the Croats, the Bosnians, the Poles, the Slovaks, and the Slovenes. Almost, but not quite, for they have ever shown a greater power of resistance than have their kindred of the other branches of the Slavonic race. The task which they have accomplished during the last score of years has been little short of miraculous. They have now practically banished their racial enemies from their midst. What has become of the Teutonic historic and traditional bureaucracy so carefully planted and protected by Maria Theresa? It is gone. 'The Stuff"—as the Germans designate the Czechs—has swept it all away, just as they have banished all that is Teutonic from

their factories, banks, business and even from political power within their borders. Twenty years ago Prince Windischgrätz, speaking on behalf of the Hapsburg Government, as President of the Council, declared with contemptuous scorn—"Austria has no knowledge of a Czech question." To-day the Hapsburg Power is struggling for its existence against the Czech power, and this same Czech question!

But to go back to dinner.

The good folk here assembled are men and women of the people. Most of them have been employed in offices and shops since, say, seven-thirty this morning, and after an interval for refreshment they will return to work till about seven or eight in the evening. They eat with a hearty appetite as only those can who understand the meaning of toil. Austrians are fond of saying that the Czechs are totally incapable of relaxation, that they are a morose, reserved, suspicious people who never indulge in gaiety or jest. Like a great many other German-made statements this is quite untrue. Exclusive, undemonstrative, abrupt they may be, at certain times, and invariably when in the presence of their racial and traditional foes. But to their friends and amongst themselves they are sanely generous, sparklingly, sometimes bitingly witty, highly intellectual and sincerely kind. Cold they may be in comparison with the southern Slavs, the Russians and even the Poles, but this coldness and caution are largely cultivated and due to the fact that they, and they alone, of all the Slav peoples, have realized the necessity for caution and reservation in their dealings with the Slav enemy. By nature—being Slavs—they are emotional, but they keep a tight curb upon themselves and seldom permit their fiery racial passions to run amok or to put them at a disadvantage. A careful study of the faces that surround one here in this very ordinary Prague restaurant will surely prove the truth of this assertion. The East and the Oriental character are indelibly printed on every countenance. Take, for example, that quietly dressed boy seated at the next table. He may be a bank clerk or a shop assistant. A good-looking fellow enough, and, at first sight, differing little from the average business man one meets in any British industrial town. But, look again. Under that cold mask burns a temperament not to be found in such a secure country as Britain. Under that still, almost dreamy exterior there are signs of pain and struggle endured for generations. As he sits there twirling a cigarette between finger and thumb he suddenly lifts his eyes. They are black, as is his hair, and gleam with a strange light that comes and goes like a danger signal. The thin mouth is compressed, the high forehead is intellectual, the complexion healthy, but,

although self-control has the upper hand at present, the boy is of the material that revolutionaries, patriots, leaders and fanatics are made from. He is the Czech character impersonated, the character that, like the Bohemian armorial lion, which has two tails to wag, has two sides to show, one for the Bohemians and Bohemia's friends, the other for the Germans.

Evidently it is the friendly Czech nature, the Czech tail that is wagging just now, for this is a frankly genial crowd, brimming over with good temper. Though the faces may be Oriental in type, they have, nevertheless, a look of latent force, a certain assurance which is the sign of individual and wisely used liberty, yet, as in the boy's face, so in these other faces, there lurks a primitive fierceness, a slumbering fire.

Corks pop, dishes rattle, conversation buzzes. The diners sit and smoke, and it is pleasant to watch them. The boy with the strange dark eyes has been joined by friends, artists or students to judge by their immense neckties that reach to their waists, and low-cut collars, three sizes too big for them. Not far off some officers are entertaining a couple of good-looking girls, who, though they may not belong to the upper classes, are remarkably tastefully clad. Czech women have a natural talent for dressing well, and in perfect refinement of style, and Prague can show costumes as lovely as Paris, nor are pretty clothes the monopoly of the wealthy. There is no coldness nor stiffness of manner to be noticed in this merry group. The ladies flick cigarettes and puff the smoke into the beaming faces of their hosts, and, as the latter replenish the glasses of their guests they take care to spill some of the wine—a Czech custom, meant to show the lavishness of their hospitality.* There are staider folk also, men and women tired and subdued by hard work and the difficulties, perhaps, of making ends meet, but, on the whole, these citizens appear to be gifted, like the rest of the Slav race, with the power to throw off at will the anxieties and burdens of existence, and to become, temporarily, like happy children.

All of a sudden there is a burst of music. On a platform in the centre of the gardens the band of one of the Bohemian regiments has crashed into a wild march, and with the first clash of the cymbals comes the recollection that this is Prague, the great nursery of music, the home of Dvořak and Smetana, of Kubelik, Smetaud Sevcik and so many other mighty masters, who, along with their Russian fellow geniuses, have succeeded in making known to the world the beauty and wonder of the Slav

* In Serbia the same custom prevails of spilling wine before drinking. Doubtless it comes from the time when a libation was poured out to the pagan gods.

racial music. Wherever one hears it throughout all the scattered Slavonic nationalities the Slav music is fundamentally the same, filled with the inherent melancholy of a suffering race. In every passionate, exciting chord can be heard the wail of a people's agony, and even when it laughs and sings the same sobbing note penetrates through its gaiety. Simple and sweet and happy the Slav music can be, but as often it is brutally savage, and, like this mysterious city, it also, is full of surprises and contrasts, full of the moaning of violins, the ripple of flutes, the crashing of cymbals, full of the voice of the East and the voice of the West, as the two meet and mingle. It is Dvořak's opera *Jacobin* they are playing, and playing so exquisitely as to call forth admiration and gratitude for the race which has given so much that is beautiful to humanity. The noises of common, everyday, useful life go on beyond the garden walls, the hoarse cries of the pedlars advertising their wares, the tooting of the motors, the rumble of the heavy country carts, the crackling of the whips, the jangle of the bells, the "times up" sirens of a hundred factories continue; but the soul's voice of the Slav race is singing here in their music.

A girl passes close by. She is probably only a little shop hand going back to her work. But a glimpse of her calls to mind the judgment pronounced by Titian on her countrywomen. Titian searched for female loveliness through a long lifetime and finally declared that it was in the city of Prague he discovered his bronze-haired ideal of beauty. Nor is he the only great critic who has left on record his appreciation of the fair ones of Bohemia —the "*Deviv Slavanske.*" The Emperor Charles IV., the Don Juan of his age, was wont to declare the Czech capital to be a *hortus deliciarum*, and assuredly he was a person of some experience! One can understand, too, why Přemysl, after he had defeated the famous army of Czech amazons, led by the handsome Vlasta, whose advances he had spurned, refused to parley with his fallen enemies, and shouted—"Off with every head in this company of sorceresses. Their charms and allurements are of the devil!" Yes—the Czech women are lovely, and their allurement, wherever it originates, is great as ever.

The afternoon is getting on. The restaurant is by now nearly empty. The games of chess and dominoes have all come to an end, the weirdly lettered journals have all been read, the bills have been paid, the musicians have stacked their instruments in readiness for the evening's performance, and the waiters are seeking what remains for them to devour.

It is time to move on.

Along the modern thoroughfares, with their clean, lofty buildings, their sumptuous shops, their bustling, purposeful,

prosperous inhabitants there is nothing particularly novel to be found, except it be the pleasing conviction that here is a Slav nation, a Slav city, that has, at last, come into line with the most advanced and modern nations and cities of Europe. Russia and Poland are forging ahead, but Bohemia is still the leader in the march of Slavonic progress. The Czechs have been the first of their race to turn dreams to action.

But however deeply one may respect this new hustling, conquering, creative energy, modern Prague is by no means the Prague which is the most fascinating, nor do its citizens love it and its ways as they do their old, their Golden Prague. When work is ended, and they get away from the noise and hurry of business, when they take their ease and permit themselves to indulge their natural inclination to dream, invariably they drift back to the scenes and memories of their romantic past.

Before strolling off into the historic parts of the city, consider for a while the side of life presented here in the business quarters. These Slavs have learnt to be every whit as practical as the Germans. Being Slavs they are not so thrifty and they have a hard struggle to overcome their racial characteristics. Yet everywhere there is ample evidence to prove how successful they have been in their endeavours to promote the welfare of their country. The more they have competed with and ousted the Germans from the factories and shops, the professions and offices, and from political power, the more they grow in strength the less and less inclined are they to accept any agreement with their former oppressors. Not long since a German politician asserted that the dissolution of the Austrian Empire was more probable than the possibility of an understanding between Czech and German. Behind the walls of these great warehouses, shops and factories, behind the counters of the many banks, one of the fiercest battles for race supremacy is being fought to a finish. Patriotism—pure, wholehearted love of country, has made these soldiers, artists and dreamers hard-headed and close-fisted in matters commercial. They realize that song and legend and a glorious past cannot by themselves bring them victory. Gold, hard glittering gold, in Czech pockets, this is the sword they now wield. These banks of Prague have established branches in all the small villages throughout Bohemia, and beyond Bohemia in every Slavonic province and country of the Hapsburg Monarchy. By means of funds raised by public subscription, the Prague citizens have endowed Czech schools over the entire land, schools where the Czech tongue is spoken, and where the heroic episodes of Czech history are kept alive. The will to national power and freedom penetrates every organization. Not a business or

factory but sets aside annually a large portion of its profits to assist newly started Bohemian enterprises in the districts still inhabited by the enemy. And as they develop and encourage their own industries they ruthlessly boycott every product of the German. From the highest to the lowest, from the waiters, who subsist on their tips, to the directors of gigantic business concerns, in very rank and walk of life may be noticed the same fervent spirit of patriotism. But whereas, it is the peasantry and the nobility in most of the other Slav lands who form the strongest elements, in Bohemia it is the lower middle class that dominates and carries all before it. This class in the capital and in the smaller Czech towns is constantly being renewed by fresh and healthy country blood. As the peasants prosper and profit by the excellent education given them in the national country schools they migrate to the commercial centres where they reinforce the army of the toilers and this oncoming multitude has now seized almost every good post in the kingdom. A few years ago the artisans, tradespeople, financiers, priests, doctors and lawyers of the capital were all Germans and the Czechs were their hewers of wood and drawers of water. To-day the Czechs rule, and the Germans, loath to descend to labour more menial, have done what the patriots intended them to do, packed up their traps and shaken the dust of the capital off their feet. By exerting their political talents and adopting the policy of continual obstruction in the central parliament at Vienna, by cohesion, by fostering the principle of democracy, by making everything subservient to the national cause, by being entirely unscrupulous when Slav interests are to be furthered, the Czechs have come, after centuries of warfare, within sight of their goal, the goal which is nothing more or less than independence and eventual separation from Austria. The Hussite war cry still resounds unchanged, and unchanging—" Emancipation ! "

When we understand the spirit which animates modern industrial Prague we take a deeper interest in the people and their life. An American once said, " I never see a little Czech factory girl, or a Czech artisan going to work but I feel inclined to lift my hat, as I might lift it to the statue of Liberty in New York harbour ! "

But modern and commercial Prague, however much it may interest, does not hold out such attractions as does historical Prague. The question is where to go ! Shall it be to the Naprstik Museum where everything that is Bohemian in costume, art and literature is preserved ? Shall it be to the ancient University, or shall the next few hours be spent in the great Cathedral, which, despite innumerable batterings, desecrations,

and pillages, is still so beautiful ? If the air were not so balmy, and the sky less blue, one would be content to enter its dusky vastness and endeavour to decipher the curious inscriptions on its old tombs and monuments of dead and gone Czech dukes and nobles and patriots. If it was winter, and the sun was not so life-giving, one might find colour and brightness whilst gazing at the magnificent Cathedral vestments, most of which are the wedding dresses of half-forgotten royal ladies of Bohemia. Side by side with the splendid coronation robes of Maria Theresa, is a cloak embroidered, when in exile, by Ann, Queen of Bohemia, and the gold and silver threads in it still sparkle as gaily as when they left the needle of the princess who was the last survivor of the dynasty founded by Libussa and the ploughboy Přemysl. But shadowy aisles and the odour of stale incense, cobwebs and ancient relics do not tempt now that the blackbirds are singing so cheerily in the gardens, and the flowers and shrubs are sending out such delicious perfumes. The Rudolfinum, a cluster of brand new classic buildings, stands in the centre of a wide open space shaded by trees. Here all the resources of art have been brought to bear, and the flower-beds burn and glow in the sunlight. Women are sitting about under the shade knitting and gossiping, old fellows are smoking and snoozing on the comfortable chairs, children are chasing each other along the paths. Cross the square and follow the Josephgasse into the queerest, most age-stricken streets it is possible to imagine. This is the Jewish Ghetto, one of the only really dirty quarters now to be found in the city. It is wisest to choose a fine day for a visit to the stronghold of the Hebrews. Just now, however, the soft breezes have blown away many of the evil odours, and even here in those grimy alleys there are clusters of greenery and bright patches of blossom. Slatternly, long-nosed, showily earringed Jewesses, fair of complexion and hair as is characteristic of the Prague Jews, half-naked children and greasy kaftanned, shuffling, Shylock-like men peer from out the carved mouldering doorways, whilst flea-bitten curs scratch anxiously amongst the garbage littered on the pavements. At every corner old clothes and curiosity shops buzz with flies. It is a weird spot ! As one picks one's way along, taking care not to come into contact with more than is necessary, the thought occurs as to when and how and by whom this extraordinary medley of streets was built. The atmosphere of the East is predominant. Legend declares that the Jews were here previous to the Christian era, in the dim days when Celtic chieftains held sway on this very ground. The Slavs have no love for the Jews nor have the Jews any affection for the Slavs, yet, Slavs and Jews seem to be inseparable. Is it some sort of

sympathy, though not affection, some feeling of having come through the same experiences, of having alike endured racial oppression that brings them together? Or is it the easy-going, open-handed, too frequently unbusiness-like nature of the Slavs which prompts the crafty avaricious people of Israel to prey upon them? Possibly both business and sentiment have had something to say to it. And it cannot be doubted that many of the Jews of Prague have done exceedingly well for themselves. Scores of Hebrews have gone out from this squalid corner and set up their homes in the fashionable boulevards and squares of the city. And scores of Christians now rent rooms in these filthy houses from merciless Jewish landlords.

These people have been here in Prague in all probability for well over one thousand years, and their huge hideous grimy synagogue stands there where the ways meet. It was built in the twelfth century and is as haunted by memories as the Christian Cathedral on the hill. On a Friday, the day of preparation for the sabbath, if one entered the door it would be to find the place crowded and redolent with the smell of garlic and dirty humanity. Every week on this day and at this hour the tapers in the lofty candelabras are lighted and flare on the deep rich folds of an old banner suspended from the ceiling. This banner is one of the few tokens of reward that Christianity has bestowed upon the Chosen People for military service rendered. Ferdinand III. it was who presented it to the Jewish soldiers, who, shoulder to shoulder with the Christian garrison, during the last months of the Thirty Years' War bravely defended the city against the Swedes. And as surprise is sometimes evinced by strangers at the number of titled Jews to be found even amongst the poorest of the race in Prague, it should be explained that Ferdinand, in his gratitude, went actually to the length of bestowing patents of nobility upon many of the Hebrew soldiers. Very ancient are the hymns and melodies sung in this strange place of worship. They are purely Oriental, having come down unaltered through the ages, and it may be that they were once sung by the shepherd David when, like the Slav boy Přemysl, he tended his flocks on the hillsides, never dreaming of the royal fate that awaited him. Oriental, too, are the queer black tunics and hats worn by the choir men and the voluminous garments of the rabbi all a-jangle with tiny silver bells. Oriental also is the treatment given to the women devotees who are carefully concealed from view behind a lattice windowed wall, in what is called the *Esoras Nashim*. But round the dingy walls of the synagogue the birds are pouring forth their rapturous songs and no Hebrew chantings can compete with their music.

To a man of the tribe of Aaron a saunter along the shady paths of this Hebrew cemetery is strictly forbidden. To come into contact with the dead means pollution for a priest of Israel. It is only the laymen of the race, therefore, who are permitted by their law to come and read the extraordinary signs and writings engraved on these hundreds and thousands of tombstones. Yet, sooner or later, the holy and the unholy, male and female will meet together here as equals and lie down under the shade of the elder bushes, under the same mossy turf. Here on this nearest tomb are two outspread hands, the crest of the house of Aaron. On another headstone is carved a pitcher, the sign of the Levite, beyond it again is an inscription dating from centuries of years ago. There is something oddly impressive in this burial ground of the most ancient of the existing civilized race on earth, and, seeing it, one understands better the meaning of the words of the Czech writer, Komensky, when he said, " I have seen and beheld and understood that I myself am nothing, understand nothing, possess nothing ; neither do others ; everything is but a vain conceit ! " And also the truth of the Slavonic proverb, " The water passes but the stones remain."

Six o'clock has struck, the afternoon is waning, and in another hour the employees in the warehouses will be at liberty to give themselves over to the enjoyment of open-air suppers and the usual evening amusement in the gardens and *cafés*. The " *Devi Slovanski*," who cut the crystal in the world-famed glass factories, will, ere long, sally out in search of relaxation, for even these lucky ones who earn their wages manufacturing a thing so perfect as Bohemian glass, feel the need of leisure. The shops, too, will presently put up their shutters, and then all Prague will abandon itself to pleasure. Already smiling, chattering throngs of *flâneurs* are seated round the marble topped tables set along the pavement in front of the big *cafés*, smoking and imbibing " white " coffee and other peculiar beverages in which the principal ingredient appears to be seltzer water. The crowd has lost some of its brilliancy, for the peasants, who alone wear the national dress, have long since trundled home to their cottages in the surrounding country. Only here and there, making a splash of vivid colour amid the more sombrely attired crowd, a belated group or two of market folk may be seen drifting, like wind-blown poppies and cornflowers, up and down the busy thoroughfares. Opposite the Town Hall in the Ring the traffic is congested. Carriages and motors flash by filled with members of the *haut monde*. Drays and lorries are rattling back to the stables and the police look on. Presently a little red petticoated peasant girl of about nine summers lets go of her mother's bunchy scarlet and purple

skirts and runs halfway across the street in pursuit of an acquaintance. A big touring car, driven at breakneck speed, by one of four men, German tourists evidently, judging by their garments and appearance, bears down upon the child. A heavy waggon crashes round the corner, and, in a swirl of white dust and whirling wheels the tiny, flaming figure disappears. An instant and the spectators have grasped the situation. Gone in a twinkling is their cold imperturbability, their chilly calmness, which is merely superficial, the result of enforced self-control. The child is a Czech, her injurers are Germans. This is sufficient, more than sufficient, to lash to fury their hardly curbed racial hatred, more than sufficient to summon to arms their democratic spirit. With cries of bitter indignation they converge from all directions on the scene of the accident, and three out of the four offenders—every one who injures a Czech, whether accidentally or deliberately, is a criminal in Czech opinion—find themselves confronted with scores of clenched fists and blazing accusing eyes. The driver of the car is down on his knees supporting the head of the dying child. Though he had undoubtedly driven at a reckless pace he plainly feels his responsibility, and seems not altogether heartless. With a shudder the little girl lifts her eyelids, gazes wildly round and essays to speak. The German says a few words to her in his own language, and a resentful frown gathers on the small white face. Turning petulantly away, the little dying creature stretches out her arms to her mother and mutters " No German—Lissa a Czech ! "

It is time for the German to betake himself away, for the crowd grows menacing. As was once said by an Austrian, " If the Emperor himself was to venture to tread upon the corns or susceptibilities of a Bohemian beggar he would have the whole Czech swarm at his throat on the spot."

In Prague people use their homes chiefly to sleep in. When they are not at work—speaking of the middle classes—they prefer public to private life. In winter they go to their indoor *cafés*, in summer to their restaurant gardens, and the whole year round the city turns out in the evenings to eat and drink and listen to the music and to talk. Though they spend their time and energy building up the fortune of their country, they are, taking them individually, rarely what we would call wealthy. Most of the middle class households in Prague exist comfortably and pleasantly on incomes ranging from £135 to £400—which is affluence. Class for class—excepting a few of the great aristocrats and landowners—they live for much less than people do in England. Abject and degraded poverty is as seldom encountered as luxury. In other cities palatial restaurants,

excellently cooked food and good music are only for those who can pay well, but in Prague such things are within reach of those who can afford very little. One can sit for hours in a *café* and order nothing but a cup of coffee, or a plate of soup, or a one- or two-course meal, which, by asking for an extra plate, can be divided with a friend—for "portions" are large. Even in the most humble of eating houses there is none of the shabbiness, the sordidness, the noise, and the dirt which are so frequently met with in the cheaper English restaurants. Go into any of the oldest streets in Prague or into some of the artisans' *cafés* and restaurants on the islands. Even these poor places have something refined and poetical about them. Very many of the most humble of the eating houses frequented by the lower classes are to be found near the cattle market. A similarly situated eating house in Great Britain would be an impossible place. Here, there is nothing to disgust and much to interest and attract. Imagine one of them. There is a large hall or room on the ground floor entered by a door on either side of which are stalls where sausages and bread are sold, nothing but drinkables being obtainable within. This door is generally decorated with large fir and pine branches, as are also the walls of the hall. Another and opposite door leads into an open garden, or courtyard, where little arbours made of evergreens are set up in warm weather and illuminated after dusk by small prettily coloured lamps. In the centre of the hall or courtyard—according to the season—there is set up a little platform, and here itinerant orchestras perform every evening, and are content to play beautifully for the pence they collect from the visitors in a wooden bowl set on the floor under the dais. The harp is a favourite instrument with the common people of Prague, and some of the finest operatic voices have been discovered amongst the singers of the Czech folks songs, who in these primitive and obscure dens rejoice the Slav souls of the masses with racial melodies. To understand how deep is the love of this people for their homeland and music and traditions, one has only to listen to Czech folk song sung in a common eating house. Picture a room or courtyard such as described, filled to overflowing with working people, mill hands, mechanics, peasants, when one of their national songs is given. See how the excitement grows, how, at the end of the first few lines, the rough guests catch up the melody, clink their glasses and mugs above their heads, and vociferously join in the chorus. But there is nothing uproarious or riotous in the excitement, no hints at drunkenness or coarseness, nothing save honest joy of life and pride in country. Even in Bohemia the most grown-up of all the Slav lands, the childlike nature of the race has not been destroyed.

So much for the restaurants of the toilers, but should one wish for quietness or more comfort the Sophia Island is the best place to go in search of it.

As evening advances the colours grow richer and deeper. Pink clouds float across the amber sky, and the river becomes a swiftly-flowing stream of topaz and molten gold, changing from gold to orange, and from orange to crimson. In the soft light against the rosy tints of the sky, the red " tent " roofs rise up as dark as the darkest terra cotta, and the piercing, slender spires, massive turrets and fairy-like cupolas seem almost to float in the transparent atmosphere. Another few minutes and the sun has gone and the day quivers to a close, and a hundred bells chime out, and the breeze that has tossed the feathery acacias since early morning subsides, and from somewhere close at hand rises the sound of music. Seen at this hour and on such an evening, the city is, indeed, " Golden Prague ! " And by-and-by, the Moldau turns blue-black, and the lights from the hillsides gleam and glitter like stars on its waters, and the bland round white moon creeps up into the purple, star-spangled sky, and the outlines of the quaint old houses, the spires and towers, and the great cathedral and royal palace appear mysteriously. And gradually and surely the wonderful uncanny charm of the ancient city steals over the soul. It is a strange charm, and the longer one stays the more it works upon the emotions. But perhaps because its charm is something that cannot be described, the Czech capital is one of the cities of Europe most written about and least understood.

There is a certain cool green garden on the Sophia Island, where the roses bloom close to the river's edge, where beds of heliotrope and carnations perfume the air: a garden with narrow gravelled paths and open spaces, where the tables are set round a big bandstand. There is nothing splendid or gorgeous about this little restaurant, except its music. Men fetch their books, newspapers and packs of cards, women bring their knitting and needlework, and, when the evening repast is finished, settle down to enjoy sherry-cobblers and mint juleps and coffee and sweet air and sweeter sounds. Then the lights are turned up on the bandstand, and the musicians begin to tune their enormous bass viols and violins, and the conductor, a tall gaunt man, comes to the front with bow uplifted, and the fierce, passionate, laughing, wailing music breaks out. Now it is a waltz they play, now it is a wicked Czech *redovak*, now simply music, nameless, styleless, lawless music, the echo of æons of human life—an exceeding bitter cry. Eyes well up with tears, limbs drop listless, all the trivialities that make up everyday, ordinary life

are forgotten, swamped in the subconscious recollections which the melody awakens. Sorrows and tragedies of long fled ages recur to memory, and the night is filled with the murmur of dead voices, the vision of pale spirit-faces and long-buried forms.

Some of the players are Tsiganes, some are Czechs, but the two races are as one when they make music. There is an underlying element in both peoples which finds little sympathy amongst other races, there is a dreamy mysticism, an indefinite semi-supernaturalism, possessed in common by the Slavs and gipsies, which seems to divide them from the rest of humanity. Fate has not dealt kindly with either Slavs or Tsiganes, they have alike been misunderstood, and so, as Liszt said, they invented a strange music for their own use, and in it they sing about themselves to themselves. Slavs and gipsies, they worshipped the same nature gods centuries before the coming of Christianity, and in their music they still bow down and worship these same old gods, though one people has accepted the Christian faith and the other still remains pagan. Nature has opened to them a boundless empire across the frontiers of which no foreigner can pass, the wealth of which no conqueror can steal. It is curious how, even in name, the Czechs and the Tsiganes have become united. The name Bohemian in the English language practically signifies a gipsy, one who lives an unconventional wild life, an artist, a pagan. Probably this arises from the fact that the gipsy race first attracted attention in Bohemia, and spread from there into other lands during the Middle Ages. But, be this true or otherwise, the Bohemians and the Tsiganes are to-day, in the minds of many, one and the same people.

The Czechs may have steeled themselves to become realists in everyday life, but they are still at heart mystics, as are the gipsies. And their mysticism has nothing in common with the unnatural and manufactured Teutonic mysticism so full of self-consciousness and artificiality. The Czechs and Tsigane mysticism is genuine, not imitative, and it has given to the world much which helps to foster freedom of thought and action.

The hours fly. The waiters yawn, except when the orchestra plays, and then they listen as if they did not know what it was to feel tired. It is time to settle the account—a trifling one—and to say farewell. But the rhythm of the music, whose notes are not our notes, follows one on the night air, out through the gate and across the shining river where the barges and long rafts of floating timber loom black as ink.

It wants yet half an hour to midnight. Climb the Hradshin and bid good-night to Prague from the ridge on which, amid dark groves stands the Premonstratensian monastery of Strabow.

The walk is not a long one, up past the old palaces of the nobility, which lie one above the other on the hillside rising from the Little Town. Drowsing behind rose-festooned, crumbling garden walls, these big houses are scarcely visible, and seem to court seclusion. Above them towers the cathedral, and above this again the monastery. From its terrace it is possible to obtain a view of the entire city. In the moonlight its buildings gleam and glisten like silver. Directly opposite, on the other side of the river rises the great rock of the Vissehrad with its citadel, the hill spoken of in Bohemian chronicles, the hill from which Queen Libussa announced to the city she had founded its future glory, declaring that it would one day rival the sun in glory. Hence the old chroniclers called their capital the daughter of Libussa—"*O ter magna triurbs, triurbs ter ingens, o orbis caput, et decus Bohemiae! Pulchrae filia pulchrior Libussae!*" Down below is the bridge, with its golden diademed saints and heroes. Everywhere there are ghosts and memories of toiling centuries of war and rapine, and the clash of rival interests, of human ambitions, of failure and success. Mighty figures and historic scenes of the past crowd and gather until cloud after cloud is at last lifted, until the whole story of this strong, rugged, patient nation, which has fought, and still fights, against such great odds is revealed.

Good-night—good-night, lovely city of a thousand memories, of a thousand well-fought fights, of much tragedy and little joy, of liberty and learning, of progress and art. So long as your river flows and your soul lives, men shall come to you, and learn of you, and love you. Good-night, *Zlata Praha*—the dawn is breaking!

* * * * * *

PRAGUE, AUGUST, 1914.

War has been declared, and Bohemia, a Slav nation, has been dragged into the whirlpool of conflict in the wake of the racial enemy of the Slavonic race. The streets of Prague are thronged with gloomy, sullen crowds. The day is dark, sultry, breathless. Thunder is in the air, and above the old citadel on the Vissehrad, black clouds are waiting ready to discharge their contents on the parched, dusty town. Everything is wrapped in gloom, an indescribable foreboding makes hearts heavy and feet lag. No brightness is visible anywhere, not a flag, or a single attempt at decoration. The flowers are wilted and faded in the parks and gardens, scorched by weeks of hot sunshine. Near the Town Hall the citizens are wedged closely along the edge of the side-walks. Evidently they are waiting for something, gazing in strained expectation down the long white boulevard. There is a sudden movement and a great sigh goes up from the packed

masses. From far off comes the sound of bugles, followed by the music of a military band. It draws nearer, first one and then another bar of the melody can be distinguished. Listen—listen, like the people, for it is the Czech hymn they are playing, the national Czech song—"The Star Banner!"

A cheer that rives the very clouds rises from ten thousand throats. Let the oppressors command, let them threaten and drive, let them do their worst. Bohemia is still a free country, and Bohemia places her Slav honour, with confidence, in the hands of her soldiers!

* * * * * *

A vast, open, shelterless plain and a driving drizzling mist. Right before the Bohemian lines are what they suppose to be the trenches of their racial kinsmen, the Russians. Through the fog it is difficult, almost impossible, to see more than a few yards ahead. A dark line of troops advances wearing what appears to be the head-dress of the Tzar's infantry.

It is the moment for which the Czechs have waited. Moving as one man they go forward to meet the on-coming Russians, lay down their arms, and salute them as—"Brothers!"

But those whom they greet are *not* their brothers, but their bitterest foes, the Prussian army! The flat round cap, common to the Russian and Prussian line regiments has deceived them.

They have blundered, they have been mistaken, but death is lightly thought of nowadays, and honour counts for much.

* * * * * *

In Vienna during the past year were displayed two banners. Both are draped with crêpe. Ask the people who go by where they came from, and why they are here, and for what reason they are covered with mourning. They will answer—these are the ensigns of the Czech regiments who treacherously attempted to go over to Russia. The regiments who once carried them have been annihilated, and justly so. And these flags are placed here to proclaim Czech dishonour!

CHAPTER VI

SCENES IN THE CARPATHIANS: LIFE AMONG THE SLOVAKS

EVERYWHERE there is quiet and rest and peace and a sense of life that is myriad-fold. It is early morning in the late summer. The sky, cleared by yesterday's rain, is brilliant, the sun has only this moment sent its red flame over the mountain tops, and the birds are carolling gaily all around. Underfoot the grass is saturated with moisture and gives forth a pungent fragrant odour. One by one the big blue forget-me-nots are opening their eyes to reflect the azure of the sky. They nearly died in their sleep last night under the tempest, but have now revived and are nodding cheerfully to the slender foxgloves and daisies. The silvery lichen on the boulders is drying, and the light that comes filtering through the lofty canopy made by the giant red-trunked pines sparkles in crystal drops on the huge tufts of grey moss which hangs in festoons from branch to branch of the fir trees. Below the black belt of the pine forest, below the oaks and birches and ashes there is a clearing, and, from here can be seen lying stretched out far far beneath, the immense plains, all golden in the soft hazy mist, and behind and around towers the glorious amphitheatre of the Carpathians. There is something angry and defiant about them, there is something savage in their aspect. Peak above peak they rear themselves, their lower slopes and steep perpendicular cliff sides densely clothed with foliage, their highest summits bald, fierce and rugged, crowned most of the year with snow. Right at the very top of one of these mountains, thousands of feet above the level of the sea, is a tiny lake. Indeed, there are many lakes, and the peasants call them the "Eyes of the Sea," because of their sapphire blueness and because they believe that between them and the ocean there are subterranean passages unknown and unexplored by man. Girt about by gigantic rocks and cold whiteness, nothing living disturbs their solitude except the chamois and golden eagles—who soar above on outstretched motionless wings and cast their shadows on the dazzling steeps. Up there, so the simple folk declare, the Good God comes down to gaze upon the world, and there is

Near Ragusa on the Dalmatian Coast.

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nothing to soil the purity of His resting-place. Just where the fringe of the forest ends and merges into an upland, flower-gemmed meadow, a tribe of Tsiganes (gipsies) are encamped. True to their instinct they have chosen a spot where beauty is splendid. The cluster of crazy brown-pointed tents shows no sign of occupation, when suddenly the flap door of one opens cautiously and a dishevelled black head appears, followed by a second and a third and a fourth. It is hopeless, however, to calculate further, for the little olive-hued bodies that come rolling, tumbling and swarming forth are apparently innumerable. Here and there the stark naked copper-coloured children dart about, gathering sticks for the fire on which to cook the family breakfast. The company has collected round three stakes that meet in a triangle, and an old witch-like woman, wrinkled and yellow as an autumn leaf, is placing two hedgehogs on a spit in readiness for roasting, whilst two or three filthy men, clad in ragged, red, silver-buttoned waistcoats—and very little else—loll on their stomachs, smoking and idly watching the proceedings. Soon a straggling purple trail of smoke begins to curl upwards, and the odour of the strange delicacy mixes with the perfume of the morning. These are the true gipsies, the *tscha tschopes Keravarom*,* the race which has no expression in their language which signifies "to dwell." These are the genuine "rulers of the solitudes." Presently a young girl, with untamed lovely eyes and skin as sun-kissed as that of a Hindoo, whose only clothing is a strip of tawny rag twisted round her waist, and a necklace of coloured beads, comes flying with hair unbound across the drenching meadow on her way to fill a pitcher at the stream. So swiftly and lightly do her slim feet touch the ground, that the gentians and fairy grasses are scarcely vexed by her passing. Then, all at once, but at first very softly, rises the dawn of music of "Pharaoh's People."

"Praise the Lord upon the cymbals, praise Him upon the loud cymbals!" † Old as music itself are these Tsigane cymbals, and as old is the melody this vagabond is playing. Up—up—soar the jubilant notes, ringing, vibrating, full of the joy of life, full of gratitude for the world which these undisciplined pagan wanderers, almost alone amongst all the discontented races of the earth, still behold and find very good. Here, and with them, it is Creation's birthday over again, and it behoves all the sons of God to shout with joy.

Startled by the music, a deer leaps for an instant into the

* Pure breed.

† Amongst the Slavs the Tsiganes are often called "Pharaoh's People," and the cymbals used by them are believed to be the same as are mentioned in the Scriptures.

open, glances round with wide, terrified eyes, and bounds back again into the covert. Whirr—whirr—from the thicket to the right comes the flutter and rush of plumage and an enormous, bright-breasted bird * spreads its fan-like black wings, and takes scared flight to regions without man. In the shadowy hidden places of these forests, long years ago, aurochs and ibex had their dwelling. To-day, far away in their higher and gloomier reaches, bears, wolves, lynxes, wild cats, roe, have their man-unmolested habitations. And birds, thousands upon thousands of birds, ring doves, blue jays, magpies of every hue and tint, fly and flit from branch to branch.

Down yonder is the stony road leading abruptly to the village. It can be reached by following the dewy, flowery path that winds through the meadow. Butterflies, amber, azure, white of wing, and big green-and-gold beetles flit amongst the blossoms, and only the Tsigane melody, the gurgling and splashing of the brook, the singing of the birds, and the buzzing of insects, break that silence.

Where the meadow path joins the road stands a tall, roughly-carved wooden crucifix. It is as hideous and lugubrious as are the generality of wayside Calvaries, and at its foot lie many faded bunches of wild flowers, placed there by childish and pious folk who see none of the ugliness. Half a mile further on is the cemetery. One might almost fancy that people who breathe this pure clear air, who come into contact with none of the harassing worries of modern life, have no excuse for dying. But here, too, is death. The queer little wooden crosses lean one against the other as if seeking support, and on the graves the grass is knee deep.

A considerable distance beyond the cemetery the road, or rather tract, is intersected by another road, and along it are coming a flock of ungainly, shaggy, ridiculously long and curly horned sheep. In front of them walk two boys. Flocks are never driven here, but are gently led by good shepherds that seem to have stepped right out of the pages of the illustrated Bibles of childhood's days. The lads wear coarse white woollen shirts and sleeveless sheepskin jackets. Their sun-scorched legs and arms are bare ; their feet are shod with untanned leather sandals, fastened to the ankles by raw hide thongs, and round their necks are many chains of blue beads. On their heads are tall black lambskin caps, the fleece of which almost hides the mischievous sparkle of their eyes. One of the youths carries on his back a sick lamb, whilst his companion encourages the flock by playing

* The Auerhahn.

a gay dancing sort of tune upon a long reed flute. Shrill and piercing, yet sweet his pan-pipes call to the loiterers to come along, to cease nibbling at the clumps of wild lavender, for there is richer herbage in the lower valley and yet another gladsome day for animal enjoyment.

By and by a lumberous waggon, drawn by four sleepy white oxen, with pine branches bobbing over their ears, zigzags into view. In it are half a dozen men and women sad-faced, quiet folk, the men, dressed in white homespun linen tunics, voluminous white breeches, wide brass-studded belts, sandals, and fantastically broad-brimmed, black, blue and white bead and flower-decked hats; the women wear full-sleeved, snowy bodices, embroidered with scarlet, red and blue, closely-clinging striped skirts, white muslin kerchiefs, and tightly-fitting crimson hoods. Their feet are untrammelled by footgear of any kind. Their faces are curiously melancholy and pensive. Blue-eyed, and delicate of feature, and fair-skinned are these Slovaks, and tall, strapping fellows though they be they have a somewhat effeminate appearance, due doubtless to their naturally refined faces, and to the fact that their hair falls loosely, or in long plaits upon their shoulders. The women, on the contrary, seem to wish to hide their tresses, for they have smoothed them madonna-wise close to their oval cheeks. Somehow, at the first glance—and the impression does not vanish—these Slavs strike one as a people who are in the world and yet have nothing in common with the world. "*Tot nem ember*," say the haughty, contemptuous Magyars of the Slovaks, meaning "not a man at all." Probably the centuries of cruel oppression to which they have been subjected by both Magyars and Teutons have stamped their mark on them, for even the babies in this land are wistful, patiently still, little morsels. As the waggon jolts on its slow way, those in it peer tranquilly down at the stranger, the women smile, and the men lift their hats and offer unintelligible, but gracious greeting in plaintive, low-pitched, melodious voices. Then they begin to sing, not as other rustics sing, loudly and cheerily, but mournfully and half, as it were, beneath their breath.

Over a cranky wooden bridge which crosses a babbling shallow river a goose girl with two long yellow pig-tails, a real live Hans Andersen kind of goose girl, in a tattered blue cotton chemise is driving a cackling herd of fat white geese and gobbling turkeys, and in a field, unconfined by hedgerows or boundaries, a small naked boy, is chiveying along a red cloud of hairy swine. Scores of magpies and glossy black crows rise and scurry away from the roadway, loudly proclaiming their wrathful indignation at being disturbed whilst breakfasting. And high overhead, above the

young maize stalks, starred with poppies and cornflowers, myriads of larks, mere specks of darkness, are ecstatically wasting themselves in song.

The door of the church, a miserable, quaint, wooden building, with several roofs set one upon the other stands open, and a casual glance leaves a memory of a dark interior, bare and cold and discouraging, as befits a church of the Reformed Faith.

The Slovaks are accused by their enemies of being dirty; but there is no sign of squalor, though there is much evidence of poverty, in this village. A broad badly-made road runs between the rows of low white-washed cottages, some of which are built of clay and some of logs. The gable ends of the houses face the road, and a few of them have little gardens.

At the nearest end of this so-called street is the inn, or hostel, and its owner is a Slovak and not a Jew, which is almost peculiar to the Carpathian districts. The absence of the Hebrews is evidence that these villagers are less impecunious, less bankrupt than most Slav countryfolk.

Every one is up and about. At the duck pond, under a clump of oak trees, women are washing, and heavy is the labour entailed in keeping clean the garments of a community which wears nothing save white materials.

Crawling in and out amongst the glistening pyramids of newly-scrubbed clothing are babies, shoals of babies, the majority of them naked. The slippery banks of the pool literally swarm with infantile life. Certainly if Slavs reproduce their race in other districts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as prolifically as here, Teutons and Magyars have good reason to fear that some day the race which they have ill-treated and contemned, may arise and by sheer force of numbers demand and obtain recognition and justice.

At the entrance of each dwelling, mattresses and brightly-embroidered quilts and sheets are airing in the sunshine, stretched across tables and chairs. In the spacious barn which does service as the inn stable, several men are conversing together as they smoke their lengthy pipes. They are well set up, broad-shouldered, muscular individuals, and they give the lie to those who scoffingly libel them as "Tots." One speculates, on looking at the enormous leather belts that encircle their waists, and measure, perhaps, fifteen or sixteen inches in breadth, and quite half an inch in thickness, what on earth these men do with the murderous-looking knives or daggers that are stuck in them. We can understand the use of the ponderous tobacco pouches, tinder boxes, screw drivers, hammers, etc., that also find accommodation within these girdles, but not the why and wherefore of the

ferocious and sinister daggers. They are, however, used only when hunting and at meals.

The villages evidently possess a fair amount of live stock; numerous fleet and adventurously inclined pigs perambulate the street unchecked, unnoticed, each one making the best of his way to and from his own dwelling, and in the adjoining fields a herd of porkers, two or three hundred maybe, bask and roll in the sunshine. One cunning old patriarch of the herd has penetrated into a potato patch—there are no barriers to prevent him—and is hard at work grubbing up and devouring all that luck brings his way.

Hay harvest begins here about the last week in July, and huge waggons, similar, probably, to those used in the time of Attila, are waiting to be driven to the meadows. Slav waggons are the same all over Slavdom. They stand more than four feet and a half high and have four wheels, with a light framework holding them together. Two or three boards are laid at the bottom, and the sides are of basket-work. The strong white oxen which are yoked to them are fifteen hands in height, and their horns measure over five feet from tip to tip. They appear just now more inclined for placid meditation than for arduous work, and their liquid brown eyes look out slumberously from beneath the pine tufts fastened to their foreheads to keep off the flies.

Maize porridge is cooking on every hearth, and onions and garlic are much in evidence, judging by the fumes that are wafted out into the hot summer air. Generally speaking, the cottagers have only two rooms, one full of beds and cupboards, the beds piled with pillows, blankets and coverlets, the cupboards crammed with clothing, webs of linen and woollen materials, and embroideries. The other, the living-room, is furnished with a large oven, or stove, having a wide hearth in front, and a chimney to let out the smoke. Near the stove stands a wooden coffer in which are preserved many precious family heirlooms. Rough wooden benches run along the walls all round the room, and serve sometimes, as beds for the younger folk. A few carved and lightly-painted wooden chairs occupy the distant corners, and on high shelves are rows upon rows of plates and jugs, dishes, cups and bowls, together with copper cooking utensils. On first entering a Slovak cottage, one fancies its owners must be dealers in china and delf, there is such a display of the beautiful native pottery. Pretty and artistically painted designs relieve the monotony of the white walls, which are also frequently hung with strips of brilliant tapestry. Religious pictures, a crucifix, and a bunch of dried basil invariably occupy a prominent place in the decorations. Add to all these things an old-world

handmill, for grinding maize, a spinning-wheel, a big hand loom, and a pile of raw wool, a jar or two of pickles, some iron pots, hams suspended from the rafters of the ceiling, a wooden and painted cradle—or cradles—in which the last hardy human annual chuckles and mumbles good-temperedly, unspoilt by over-much attention; and the inventory of a Slovak kitchen is fairly complete.

Usually one roof tree shelters several generations of the same family. From the day they first learn to use their hands and wits, till the day they lie down to enjoy their last and best rest, all are expected to take a share in the common toil. The life of these Slovaks is that of simple husbandmen, and they would be prosperous and happy were the laws and taxations imposed upon them by their rulers less cruel and less heavy. Of the various subjugated Slav peoples they are the most enslaved. It may be that their innate gentleness of character, their simplicity and inability to organize and stand up for their rights has helped to bring them so thoroughly under the heel of their oppressors. Gradually they have been robbed of their liberty, and every feeble effort they have made to regain it has been ruthlessly crushed.

Their beautiful and ancient language had been banished from the schools, and from the courts of justice. Their literature is banned, and their press is persecuted. Electoral corruption and bad administration make it practically impossible for a patriotic Slovak to enter the Austrian Parliament, and do battle for his people. There is no right of assembly, and if a meeting is to be held, police permission must first be requested, and is, as a rule, refused. State spies abound, and political intrigue poisons everything. There is little redress for wrongs committed, and there are few to help or have compassion. The Slovak's sole duty is to find the money somehow, anyhow, for the payment of exorbitant taxes, and to quote the words of Vayonstry's song of the exiled Slovaks, "Our village does not give bread to its children." It is one of the saddest lands in Europe, this beautiful country, which, but for the selfish and short-sighted brutality of its rulers, might be a land flowing with milk and honey. Over its valleys and mountains and forests has descended the shadow of the slave driver, and despair lies heavy on the hearts of its people.

Year by year from these little homesteads, thousands of men go into exile, to America and the British Colonies, in search of fairly paid work, and the freedom they cannot have at home. It is said that there are many hundred thousand Slovaks in the United States alone. All in vain do the Slovak clergy,

Catholic and Protestant alike, invoke patriotism, but handicapped and frustrated as it is amongst these people, patriotism is as dust and ashes to the soul. Yet burning and fiercely alive it is, nevertheless, thanks to the women. The men may emigrate in baffled fury, but not the women. They remain in the land of their birth, clutching jealously and tenaciously to their small holdings, preferring to do anything rather than desert their country and rear their offspring on foreign soil. Awful and heartrending are the emigration scenes witnessed yearly in villages such as this. Yet one grain of comfort remains. Almost every male who goes into exile sooner or later returns to his hearth and his womenfolk, and returns with some money in his pocket, much valuable experience, and an intense and consuming desire for vengeance upon those who have wrought evil to his race. And latterly, the influence of these returned exiles has instilled so much new life and energy into this downtrodden people, that even their obtuse rulers have become alarmed, and tardy attempts are now being made by the Government to stem the tide of Slav emigration. During the last year or two, State societies have been organized for the relief of poverty-stricken Slovaks, and temperance and philanthropic committees, which often do more harm than good, have been called into being; but they only tend to fan to more passionate anger and bitter resentment the peasants who do not ask for, and who do not require moral and agricultural reform or alms. They want only honest justice, the right to speak their own tongue, think their own thoughts, cultivate their own fields, to know that they will not be deprived of every penny of the profits they gain. Liberty is what they want, and nothing less will satisfy them.

Except that they are no longer a free people, life with the Slovaks remains much the same as it was in the remote patriarchal time when, along with the other tribes which to-day make up what is known as the Northern Slavonic group, their forefathers came into this region of Central Europe. Then there was land enough and to spare for all. These mountains and plains belonged to nobody, these forests they shared with the wild beasts. Those were good days before the Huns and the Teutons and the mischief-making missionaries of the rival Western and Eastern faiths, who preached love and sowed hatred, who came ostensibly to give, but in reality to rob, burst in upon their sunny lives. Those were joyous times, when, to quote the ancient Slav saying: "Where my plough and my hoe and my scythe passeth, that land is mine!" when there was no greedy alien Government, and when people took possession of the ground as they tilled it. But then more powerful people came, and behind their armies

and their missionaries marched all the hosts of evil; envy and malice, brutality and murder, rapine and death came also and stayed.

Centuries ago the forbears of these peasants were the same herd-tending agricultural folk that they are now. The methods and implements they use at the present time are the same as those employed by their ancestors a thousand years ago. Everything they possess is made by hand. Probably the geographical character of the country, as well as its reactionary Government, accounts to some extent for the backward condition of the people, and of this backwardness there can be no doubt. The peasantry build their own houses of wood or mud, mixed with cow dung, using the earth out of their fields, and cutting the timber from the forests. Their tools are the tools of man's infancy. Ploughing is carried on by the crude old plough drawn by oxen, and not a few of these ploughs are of wood. Sowing is done by hand, and as they scatter the seed, Slovak sowers repeat the same Pagan incantations that were pronounced by their ancestors over the furrows. Their scythes, sickles, hoes, spades, looms, corn-mills, all are relics of the dim and primitive ages. For commerce, these Slovaks have not the slightest taste, except in so far as it is connected with the disposing of their produce. When they trade, it is only to sell locally their own agricultural goods. They take their eggs, wood, linen, cheese, embroideries, and pottery by cart to the nearest town, and there, as a rule, get disgracefully cheated by the crafty Hebrews, the loud-voiced domineering Magyars, and calculating Germans, and eventually return to their homesteads painfully conscious that they have spent their time and labour for nought.

The Slovaks are still an undeveloped branch of the Slav race, and one can appreciate the covert and cruel sneer, stinging through the description given of them in the Austrian-Hungarian guide books: "A people, poor, hard-working, honest, stupid and superstitious."

As is the case amongst all undeveloped peoples, it falls to the lot of the women to accomplish the giant share of the work. From cock-crow till far into the night Slovak women labour. Not only are they expected to obey the law of nature, by producing and rearing as many children as possible, but they have also to keep the house in order, cook the food, feed and milk the cattle, draw the water, bake the bread, and frequently grind the corn. They must see also to the flax, sow the seed, steep, comb, spin, and finally weave it on the domestic loom. After the sheep are shorn in spring, it is their duty to wash, comb and spin the wool, to weave all the materials made from it, manufacture the

beautiful clean-toned native dyes, and stitch the equally beautiful embroideries, and in addition to all this, they uncomplainingly share with their men folk in the outdoor work in the fields and forests. However, they take things as they find them in this country, and neither men nor women shrink from toil, though it be of the roughest and severest kind. They dig and reap with a will, and their intense self-respect makes them show respect to others. Nothing can exceed the generous, single-hearted hospitality of the Slovaks. To be open-handed and hospitable is natural to the Slav character everywhere, but there is something very pathetic, something unusual and all too rare in the uncalculating, eager spirit manifested towards strangers, or towards those even poorer than themselves, by these kindly people, and, like all else that appertains unto them, this spirit belongs, not to the present age, but to the old days before the world had grown so suspicious.

But to return to the village and the present hour. The last cutting of the hay crop is taking place, and dozens of carts and waggons have crawled into the street, bringing peasants from the neighbourhood, who have come to render assistance. At the entrance to the inn stable, or barn, the old pastor is hailing the newcomers, saluting every incoming troop of boys and girls in the quaint formula, still often used in the most remote districts, "*Servus domine spectabilis.*" He knows them all from infancy, they are his family, and he has their welfare as much at heart as he has his own.

It is almost six o'clock now, and the women have got through their housework; the maize porridge has been eaten, and the villagers and their visitors are shouldering their scythes and rakes, and, with the waggons, are moving off in the direction of the meadows. The sun is growing hotter and blazes down on the white and brilliantly coloured clothing of the crowd, but despite the fine weather, anxious glances are cast to where, on the highest summits of the mountains, some sulky purple clouds are hovering. There was thunder last night, and rain, heavy enough to increase the task of to-day, and St. Elijah * has not yet altogether ceased to mutter and grumble up there in the deep, far-distant gorges.

Meadows in summer are always beautiful, but the meadows of the Carpathians are incomparable. Immense seas of grass land, interwoven with brightest colour, interspersed with golden buttercups, cornflowers, scarlet poppies, scabins, ox-eyed daisies, and crimson clover, slope swiftly upwards towards the green

* The peasants say it is St. Elijah complaining when they hear thunder.

foothills, towards the oak and birch and fir, and larch woods, on up to the dark frontier of the country of the pines, and on past the gloomy ravines, right up to the great, savage, all-encircling mountain ranges, the crests of which look from the distance like the waves of an angry, storm-tossed ocean. Rank behind rank, like a mighty host, they rear themselves, these awesome heights, every now and again veiling their haughty brows behind scurrying, fleecy, pearl-tinted clouds. The indigo shadowed precipices at their base dream through the noontide haze, and the forests and uplands in the foreground simmer in the heat. Mere existence is a delight. The blood dances in one's veins, and every sense becomes atuned with nature, so intoxicating is the air, so genial is the sunshine.

No people—so the Magyars and Teutons assert—are more hopelessly ignorant of the world, the greater world, as they term it, than the stay at home "*Tots.*"

But when gazing on this scene one can feel a certain sympathy with these ignorant ones, not unmixed with envy. What can the world, a man-made world, offer in exchange for all this beauty? Imagine what the Slovak immigrants think when dumped down for the first time, say, in New York. What bewilderment, physical sickness and weariness they must experience, closed in and suffocated by noisy, stuffy streets, and ugly factory walls, accustomed as they are to magnificent sweeps of sky, to snow-crowned mountain peaks that glisten like molten silver, to sunrises and sunsets of fiery glory, to the crashing of hill torrents, the singing of birds, and the roar of thunder-storms moving with swift and terrible force over limitless leagues of mountain and plain! How they must stand in miserable, stupid dejection in front of the whirling, nerve-shattering, up-to-date machinery of civilization, the shrieking engines, motors, and electric trams that have become such an inseparable part of ordinary city life! How their exiled souls must yearn for the old things of home; for the days when they were so patiently and so ignorantly content to pursue their simple daily tasks after the awkward but picturesque fashion of their forefathers, untroubled by the fact that men had discovered all sorts of new and startling inventions to assist them to hasten through youth and get vulgarly rich, or, abjectly, degradingly poor, and to die sooner than necessity requires!

It is difficult, indeed impossible, to imagine the Slovaks anywhere except where they are, here in their own homeland. Modern life is in civilized communities painted in drab and sombre hues; how, out of the picture then would seem even the dress of these people!

It is high noon and they are resting, and eating their midday meal. It is extraordinary how little they require in the way of food to keep them in health and strength. Black bread and cheese made from sheep's milk, and a sip or two of *slivovitza* suffices them. There is, to be sure, a good deal of nourishment in the Slovak cheese, and no matter how poor a family may be the housewife manages to keep a few milking sheep for the purpose. Sometimes the cheese is manufactured at home, but more frequently the little milk-yielding flock is sent to a shepherd who possesses a sheep dairy, and who agrees to supply the flock-owners with a certain quantity of cheese from the milk of each animal, taking whatever else he may make above the quantity agreed upon as his own profit. Often a shepherd cheese-maker has several hundred sheep in his charge at a time, so he doubtless contrives to make something out of the arrangement. Poor as they are, and they are very poor, one realizes that their poverty is not so humiliating as that which exists in the midst of wealthier and more progressive peoples. Their wants are few, and this is fortunate, for much of what little money they have is taken from them in taxation; but, like Slavs generally, they do not employ paid labour, and, when it chances that one village or family finds itself unable to cope with the work that falls to it, the rest of the community render aid. There is no household so poverty stricken but can lay claim to a few cows, some pigs and sheep, and with these possessions they can keep their bodies and souls together in decency. Oppressed they may be by the State, but, excepting in the case of the Government officials, they are the servants of no man, unless, as too often happens, they are so foolish as to place themselves in the power of the moneylenders.

The waggons have been drawn up in a semicircle, and, seated on the freshly-mown, perfumed grass, under their shade, the haymakers are thoroughly enjoying themselves. The oxen have been unyoked and lie cheek by jowl with their human friends, chewing the cud of blissful restfulness. The bread and cheese have been demolished, and one of the men has produced a weird-looking musical instrument, a species of bagpipes. Some one starts a song, the rest join in, and a sad melody floats across the sun-steeped valley. It is a Slovak folk song, sweet and melancholy and wild. There is nothing warlike or defiant or triumphant in this music, for these are a conquered and suppressed people, who have never achieved victory, or known the joy of battle, or the sensation of liberty, and they can only sing of what they know and understand. They sing of the sighing of their forests, the glory of their mountains, the voices

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of the winds, the babbling of brooks and waterfalls, of the flowers, and the birds, and the common incidents of home life, of love and birth, and death, of their long slavery, of fairies and spirits, of their vague and oft disappointed hopes and aspirations. Every little while a childish, irrepressible note of gaiety breaks through the melancholy of the music, like a ray of sunlight through the rain mists, like the smile of a child, who, when weary of sobbing, suddenly draws breath and laughs at a passing, bright-winged butterfly.

All who have ever heard the Slovaks converse in their own tongue have felt the fascination of their speech. In their language, as in their music, the myriad sounds of nature seem blended, and if their speech is low and sweet, how much sweeter is their singing!

A tiny bundle—there are scores of other bundles, just the same, lying rolling in the hay—whimpers, and its mother, a deep-chested, blonde-haired woman, little more than a girl, stretches out a strong brown hand, grasps the wailing, tightly bandaged morsel of humanity by its wrappings, and unabashed proceeds to suckle it, for they are primitive folk, and have not yet learnt the meaning of shame. Strong as horses, upright as young poplars, these barefooted, soft-voiced women, if not perhaps as beautiful as their Czech or Croatian female kinsfolk, attract by their very serenity, their "animal stupidity." Nevertheless, the neurotic, breastless, world-soiled, fashionable mothers of gay Vienna are glad to pay these Slovaks almost anything they demand, in order to secure them as foster-mothers for their civilization-enfeebled infants. Many a Slovak family "fortune" has been founded, many a Slovak farmstead has been enriched by the earning of Slovak women, who, leaving their own babies to be nourished by exuberant female village friends—prospective sharers in the gains to be earned—have gone to the Austrian capital to get employment as wet-nurses, perhaps in some princely or noble family.

The sun has become a burning, thrusting shaft of light, an intense stillness lies upon the earth, but within an hour work has recommenced, and the scythes are again flashing to and fro through the grass. Up and down, with rhythmic regularity, sways the long line of mowers, followed by the women, tossing the warm hay on pitchforks above their heads. Not till the light has lost its hard glare and the shadows have grown long and cool, do they cease toiling. Then the oxen are once more hitched to their yokes, the peasants scramble into the carts, and, with wreaths hung round the necks of the animals, and posies tied to the whips, they take the way towards home, towards supper and

an evening of merry-making. They are singing as usual, but the song dies on their lips, for, round a bend in the road comes another procession. It is a child's funeral, and the mourners have come a long distance down from the higher hill slopes to the cemetery. On a crude bier of planks, drawn by two oxen, is laid the little white and gilded coffin, half hidden under bunches of wild flowers and greenery. And pattering along on noiseless sandalled, or naked feet, follow thirty or forty women and girls resplendent in their gala dresses of white, with gorgeous handkerchiefs and overskirts of orange, scarlet, blue and purple, the colours of which in the slanting sun rays, glow with intense brilliancy. Behind the women walk the men, clad also in their best garments; and very hot and wearisome must be these huge felt and sheepskin coats, though they add not a little to the wild beauty of the picture. None of the company are weeping; only their natural expression of mute patience is slightly more noticeable.

As the waggons of the haymakers pull up on one side to allow the bier free passage on the narrow track, the wide-brimmed hats and shaggy lambskin caps are reverently lifted and subdued greetings are exchanged. Death does not scare or annoy the Slovaks, for, after all, death is as much a part of nature as birth, and why, therefore, should they fear or dread its presence?

In the barn the evening repast is ready, set out on three long rows of barrel-supported planks by the older women who have remained at home to cook. Food is the only recompense asked by the visitors for their services in the fields—food and some amusement. With sleeves rolled up to their shoulders, and short skirts tucked up shorter, the female portion of the community come and go, carrying steaming bowls of the inevitable maize and garlic stew cooked with fat, tremendous dishes of boiled potatoes and platters of curdled milk, a sort of sour junket. In the yard of the inn, some boys, who have been industriously turning the spits over a couple of scorching fires, are watching, crimson-faced and hungry-eyed, the attacks made by a sinewy-armed damsel on a mighty roast of mutton, from which she is slashing slices upon a split tree trunk. Rarely, indeed, do htese people indulge in flesh food, hence the interest and eager anticipation aroused. Great chunks of black bread are piled on the tables, and the men stand about smoking and drinking *slivovitza*. The atmosphere of the barn is horribly stifling, and reeks of oily goat and sheepskin coats, of steaming bodies, of onions and garlic. Soon the buzz of conversation subsides and the noise of eating arises, glasses clink and everyone demolishes as much as possible in the shortest possible time; fingers and excellent teeth being substituted for knives and forks. The oxen, too,

that lie lazily before the door likewise munch supper, indifferent to the swarms of flies that have settled to enjoy a meal also on their white, grey-flecked necks. Certainly of all this primitive assembly the shepherds present the most curious appearance. Attired in dilapidated old sheepskin cloaks, tallow cured, and of offensive odour, their long matted locks crowned by woolly caps, the hairs of which stand on end like the hairs of a gollywog, their feet and legs swathed clumsily in yards of ragged bandages, intheir queer sandals they look as if they had tramped through a century of centuries, and the big crooks, which they have stacked up against the wall, add to the impression.

If not so excitable or light-hearted as are their racial kindred in other Slav lands, the Slovaks can nevertheless be joyously convivial. Beneath the flapping brims of their wide hats, the long-nosed, thin-jawed, sunburnt faces of the men beam with mild cheerfulness, and the women smile and chatter, placidly content. The good food has heartened them, and so has the *slivovitza*. As the tobacco smoke thickens interest gradually centres round a taciturn-looking fellow, who, as one of the company remarks, " has been, oh, very very far across the ocean and has seen much." He can speak English through his nose—this marvellous individual, and what thrilling tales he has to tell of American wealth, and splendour, and liberty ! Scarcely do his enthralled listeners venture to draw breath whilst he relates of houses and palaces that stand as high as the stars, of ships the size of towns, of stairways that run up and down of themselves, of a land and people free, quite free, of men who do not scorn and hate each other because they chance to be of different races or religions. As may be imagined his story is a lengthy one, and the summer dusk has closed in before the narrator, gasping, thirsty and almost foaming at the mouth with excitement and pride and revolutionary passion, brings his flow of eloquence to an end in the mouth of a big earthenware pitcher.

Poor " Tots "—they have much to learn, and a toilsome road to travel before they can take their place on the giddy heights of modern civilization and then, perchance, they will wish to be back at the beginning of things again !

Meanwhile there is a stir in the street, and gusts of girlish laughter can be heard in the vicinity of one of the cottages at the end of the village. There is to be a wedding from this cottage to-morrow, and, according to custom, the bride is starting out to carry her wedding cake round the different dwellings. In another few minutes she and her girl companions appear at the door of the barn. They make a pretty picture as they hover shyly on the threshold, their slender figures silhouetted against

the lilac blueness of the evening sky, their young faces illuminated by the flickering light of the candles which sparkle on their white clothing and tinsel-encrusted finery. The bride, a slim creature of not more than sixteen, with a small pale face and childish light-blue eyes glances nervously around and dimples as the company give her their salutations. Then, taking courage, she steps forward from amongst her giggling retinue, breaks off a portion of the huge loaf she bears under her arm, and offers a few crumbs to each one present with an invitation to attend her marriage on the morrow. Like the rest of her countrywomen, this girl can only reckon upon one day—her wedding day—out of her whole existence on which she will not be a drudge but a person of importance. What matter that love seldom eases the duties and burdens of matrimony: what matter that the marriages here are generally arranged by the parents and not by the contracting parties: what matter that the passing of a maiden from her father's and mother's keeping into that of her husband is conducted in a manner that suggests she is not a woman with a soul and a heart, but a brute beast to be "sold" * to the highest bidder:—what matters all this, if just for twelve hours she is free to eat and drink and show off to advantage her bridal crown of tinsel and paper roses, her whitest chemise, her most richly embroidered jacket and apron? What matters the past, or the future if in the immediate present she is permitted merely to look fair and give full rein to her suppressed womanly and coquettish instincts?

Sincerely it is to be hoped that the weather will keep fair, and that the sun will shine forth when, decked out in all her glory, the bride goes to the family baking-trough and takes her seat thereon, whilst three locks of her hair are cut from her head by her mother, and given to the wind.

A dire calamity it would be, and ominous of ill luck, if rain fell when the bridegroom and his friends knocked at the bride's door to escort her to the church. But across the sky, grim phantom-like clouds are hurrying and massing in battalions upon the mountains, and the grey-haired old shepherds shake their heads despondently. They know all the secrets of nature, do these shepherds, and why not, seeing they spend their lives on the heights, sprawling on their stomachs, watching the grazing ewes, and the chasing cloud shadows, and the coming and going of the winds, leaving what herding is needful to wolfish, vigilant dogs?

* Amongst the Slovaks and Northern Slavs a bride is not "given away," but "sold," the bride's parents demanding purchase money for their daughter.

Clatter—clatter—the batterings of ponies' hoofs, and the noise of wheels, coming at an unwonted speed, draws every one into the road. The lean, sly-eyed yellow curs rush forward and add to the general excitement and commotion, by their yelping. Through the darkness can be descried a mean rattle-trap kind of carriage, a pair of wretched light-coloured, exhausted, perspiring little ponies, and a Jew, in a black kaftan, with a tall black hat jammed down over his dangling, dishevelled curls. He, too, like his beasts, seems utterly exhausted, and as he clambers down from his high perch, showing legs clad in whitish stockings, and feet shod in heelless felt slippers, he keeps muttering and gibbering into his matted beard. He has had a fright, but then, these Jews are so timorous that the sight of a dog's teeth, or of an upraised whip, or even the hooting of owls is sufficient to fill them with terror.

The newcomer must have brought startling news, else why has he driven his animals so mercilessly and shaken his own flabby body almost into a jelly? Yet he goes on muttering and mumbling unintelligibly to himself, and his furtive eyes dart from one inquiring face to the other in the crowd that has gathered about him and his vehicle. A rascally-looking Tsigane has been leaning up against the side of the inn door. Suddenly, with a yell of horror, flinging his arms over his head, he leaps off like a stag into the night. A shudder runs through the little company, and anxious eyes stare into the shadows that have swallowed up "the poor man," * and his awful words, "War—*ap i mutende*—war—mobilization—*war!*" Men's hands, women's hands clutch at the Jew's kaftan, and he is shaken till his few teeth rattle in his head. Twice, thrice, he essays to utter something, and finally he manages to gasp—"He says truly—the order is out, is on the way here now, for a general mobilization—war—war—God of Abraham—war—with Russia—my son—my son!" "*Thy* son," shrieks a young woman with a month-old baby in her arms, "*thy* miserable thieving son," screams another sturdy woman, gripping with her nails the coat sleeve of her boy, a lanky youth of about eighteen, "*thy* son," sobs the little shivering bride, as with thin small hands she fondles the big clenched fist of her bridegroom, conscious now of how much he means to her. "*Thy* son—*phui!*—what of *our* sons, *our* men?"

The only person that keeps silence is the innkeeper's old grandmother. Her face wears an expression difficult to comprehend. Her tired dim eyes are fixed to where, between the storm clouds, above the rugged mountain crests, a gleam of

* The Tsigane has nicknamed himself "the poor man" (*Tschorelorom*).

moonlight is showing. It seems as if she saw something through the darkness—something that the rest cannot see—what is it ?

* * * * * *

Her vision was a battlefield, a battlefield vaster and more horrible than can be described, a battlefield in these Carpathians that have been her home : a battlefield which has brought no glory, but has only strewed the ground with her people with mangled bodies, dead bodies and bodies that still breathe and cry with agony and curse the God Who delayeth their release. What the innkeeper's grandmother saw was her homeland laid waste by shot and shell and sabre, by fire, by cholera, by fever. What she saw was hell let loose. What she saw were her own sons and grandsons, and the fathers and sons of all these other women, set in the forefront of the Teutonic and Magyar lines to meet a horrible end at the hands of their Slavonic brothers. What she saw was Slav forced to lift up hand against Slav at the bidding of the common Slav enemy. For ignorance and long oppression make of men sheep, and what can sheep do when the ravening wolves gather around them ? Much more she beheld which has not yet been revealed ; perchance, as in the sky she gazed through, there was a gleam of hope, a flicker, betokening the advent of better things to come. God alone knows what else she saw in her vision.

And high, high above all human sorrow and pain, high above the smoking ruins, the blood drenched meadows, the gore reddened rivers, the corpse secreting forests, the sodden, flooded, death-haunted roads, high above the blackest thunder clouds, the most blinding mists and the whirling hurricanes, around the little blue and frozen lake on the mountain tops, the snowdrifts are still pure and shine gloriously under the feet of the Eternal One, Who stands there to lead His people through darkness into light.

Hear the words of that brave old Slav, Vladimir Monomachus, who was laid long centuries ago to rest beside the Neva. " In hunting amidst the thick forests, how many times have I been thrown down by buffaloes, wounded by the antlers of stags, and trodden under the feet of elks ! A furious wild boar rent my sword from my baldrick ; my saddle was torn to pieces by a bear ; this terrible beast rushed upon my courser, whom he threw down upon me. But the Lord protected me. Oh, my children, fear neither death nor wild beasts. Trust in Providence ; it far surpasseth all human precautions." *

* Karamsin, ii. 202.

CHAPTER VII

VIENNA: THE INDOLENT CAPITAL

"LET us eat all we can get, and wear out our clothes, for we are soon going to heaven!"

So the Viennese proverb goes, and what the Viennese preach they practise. Individually they regard themselves as first-class travellers *en route*, through an altogether pleasant—so far as they are concerned—world, for a still pleasanter one beyond, where it is *certain* they will at once resume their merrymaking, their eternal eating and drinking and letting everything go, where or how it pleases, in a brand new and everlasting *Wiënstadt*. Let other nations, other cities, other governments brawl and batter and worry, seeking for what they call reform and liberty; let them bespatter each other daily and hourly with the vulgar mud of politics, but they, at any rate, will never make of themselves a spectacle so absurdly ridiculous. They refuse to fret or fume, to struggle or trouble to leap into any unpleasant abysses, or to soar to any uncomfortable heights in the name of principle. Why should they? Are they not the most joyous, the most beautiful, the most exclusive, the most cultured, the most contented, the most loyal, the most religious, and—figuratively speaking—the most moral people in the whole universe? What says Menzel of them? "*Ein kerngesundes und liebenswürdiges Volk.*" *

They pay their good Kaiser for being kind enough to take upon himself the arduous and thankless task and responsibility of directing state affairs, thus easing their shoulders and consciences of the burden. He and his ministers are amply recompensed for leaving them at leisure to be happy in themselves—which they manage to do better than most people—and they ignore the desires of other races subject to them who manifest a similar desire to be left to themselves.

"We want no clever people!" cried one of their Emperors. This is the Hapsburg policy. It suits the paternal Austrian Government that its children are slow of thought. What on

* "A thoroughly healthy and lovable people."

earth would happen if the citizens of this easy-going *Wiänstadt* suddenly developed intellect, if they, all at once, or ever, ceased to cultivate the animal, and began to find pleasure in the spiritual; if they stopped in the middle of their singing and dancing to take down the dictionary and discover fascination in the word *Kannegiessern?* * Howling mobs, gory revolutionaries, and obnoxious fanatics of all sorts would prove disturbing to the ancient Hapsburg philosophy—"*Losst's gehen wie's geht!*" †

The afternoon sunshine lies in a golden haze over the narrow, aristocratic streets in the neighbourhood of St. Stephen's—"*Stefhan*," as the great four hundred feet high and six or seven hundred year old cathedral tower is familiarly termed. The ancient Stadt, the city proper, which is enclosed within the two or three mile embracing arm of the Ring-Strasse, is basking in the summer sun, complacently sure of the fact that everything is for the best in this best of worlds, that is to say, in the world of Vienna which has its exact centre at the big circus, under the shadow of "*Stefhan*," and ends where the last and most fashionable suburban villas have been built, round the various termini of the tram lines. Automobiles throng the thoroughfares, large, shiny, noiseless automobiles full of exquisitely dressed, beautiful, fair-haired women who have the outward appearance of being frigidly, stupidly cold, but whose moral temperature is in reality dangerously above the normal. Crazy, rattle-trap omnibuses are waiting in a doleful row near the door of the Cathedral, and such broken-kneed horses could surely never be forthcoming anywhere save under the protection of a thoroughly paternal *régime!* Beside one of the grim, sculptured groups of curiously anatomied, chip-nosed saints and angels which adorn the outer wall of the Dom, the wizened hags, who deal in ginger nuts, bootlaces, lemonade, rosaries, and poppy-seeds covered buns, are doing quite a brisk trade, for to-morrow will be a feast day, and many people are coming to confession, and to light a candle before the miraculous Virgin who, behind a wire netting in the cathedral choir, looks black and ugly, but who, nevertheless, is able to perform deeds of supernatural wonder. As a wit once said, "In no other city are there to be found so many white Sundays, blue Mondays, red Thursdays, black Fridays, and Golden Saturdays as in Vienna," where the boast is that its citizens not only *esse*, but, *bene esse!* ‡ Stroll about these dark streets—comparatively dark, even in mid-summer—and try to discover wherein lies the charm of the Hapsburg capital. The

* "A low politician."
† "Let things go as they please."
‡ "Not only live, but live well!"

shops, though excellent, are small and somewhat gloomy. The pavements are by no means clean, and the dust, swept up by the famous Viennese wind, which blows on two hundred and sixty five days out of the year, and which the venerable army of dust-men, wielding prehistoric brushes, are utterly unable to cope with, is both suffocating and blinding. The temperature of winter is very low, and it rises to the opposite extreme in the dog months, and in late spring and early autumn rapid alternations from heat to cold, and from cold to heat, occur two or three times in twelve hours. Sufficient air and light are luxuries in Vienna with difficulty to be had by even the Imperial Master of *die Burg*, that huge, grey, lugubrious palace, full of faded tapestries, gilding, ghosts and sorrow, or even the magnificent Lichtensteins, or the Esterhazys or the Khevenhüllers, or the Festetics, whose antique portals and escutcheons, dating, some of them, from before the time of Rudolph of Hapsburg, stand there stolidly guarded by pompous, silver-baton-in-hand domestics. What, then, is the attraction of this behind-the-times, reactionary city, where prices are so exorbitant that, even the most casual tourist wonders how its poorer classes contrive to obtain enough nourishment to stave off the pangs of hunger, let alone indulge their natural inclination to over eat? What, then, is the secret of Vienna's charm? Not a doubt about it, it lies in the amiable, unthinking indolence of its inhabitants. And by this one means its only recognized population composed of the lofty, haughty, people one seldom meets, but hopes to catch a fleeting glimpse of behind their palace window blinds, and the gay crowd one sees eating and drinking in the restaurants and *cafés*, listening to the bands, driving in the Prater, shop gazing in the Graben, and throwing buns and nuts to the Imperial beasts in the Zoological Gardens of Schoenbrunn. But almost as far below the knowledge and scorn of these last folk, as they, in their turn, are beneath the regard and contempt of the lofty, exotic, seldom seen, feudal aristocrats, there is *another* class, there are *other* peoples—but of these later.

As it is fine weather and all the smart carriages and taxis are conveying their inmates to the Prater, it may be as well to follow in their wake. Away from the streets there is fresh air, and space for exercises in this lovely green park. Trees cast a delightful shade over its broad smooth avenues, and its many garden restaurants and *cafés*, where cheerful dance music and coffee drinking and gossip are unceasing. The red and white and blue and green and brown tunics of the officers are conspicuous everywhere, for wherever good-looking women of any class or kind are gathered together, there are these sons of

Mars in the midst of them. But do not make the mistake of fancying that these elegant, faultlessly attired fair ones belong to the inner circle of Viennese society. Highly born ladies seldom, nowadays, shed the light of their countenances upon the ordinary public in popular public places. They have their own very select restaurants, and "five o'clock" shops where they alone are welcomed, and where they conduct their scandals, and exchange the latest Court gossip. They have also their boxes in the Hofopera, and so on. But the Prater has, lately, become quite too horribly vulgar. And the possessors of sixteen, or twenty, or more quarterings cannot possibly soil their shoes on ground trodden by even the most orthodox *bourgeoisie*, never to mention the encroaching and unspeakable Hebrews! Wealthy Jews, *chic* nobodies, and still more *chic*, overscented, naughty ladies of the "half-world" and the *corps de ballet* of the Hofopera and expensive mistresses who minister to the passions of the Don Juans of the Jockey Club—there are plenty of these, it being the correct thing for men of fashion and standing to flaunt and exhibit a *chère amie*. And besides all these eupeptic persons there are the rag, tag and bob-tail always in evidence in such a place. Not a sign is to be noticed of the well-bred, haughty langour that characterizes the *ancien régime*, although here and there, strolling alongside their lady friends, may be observed a few tall uniformed figures, that walk slowly with heads lowered and shoulders hunched forward in the attitude considered correct by masculine nobility. The flower beds are glowing and fragrant, the grass is verdant, the orchestra leaders regale the pleasure seekers with Strauss's most frivolous waltzes, the cream is rich in the coffee, the cakes are delectable, and nobody bothers about anything—"*Jo! worum nit gor?*" * Life is good, and who cares what may happen to-morrow if to-day be pleasant? The ability "heartily to enjoy existence" the Lord has certainly bestowed upon the Viennese.

Evening—and the principal *cafés* in the Ring and Kärtnerstrasse are ablaze with light. Through the doors and windows one can see the dangling, dazzling electric bulbs scintillating on gilded walls and ceilings. One can hear the ceaseless throb of music, and watch the swarthy Tsigane and Czech musicians swaying ecstatically over their instruments. One can see, too, the red-lipped courtesans and their "friends" sipping harmful little drinks, and hear, through the laughing, jeering, rippling melodies the popping of corks and clatter of dishes and chatter of tongues.

* "Yes—why not?"

The footways are crammed with sauntering, idle multitudes that drift, at a snail's pace, along the streets, interested in the glittering shop windows, in themselves, and in the bejewelled and be-sworded occupants of the brightly lighted automobiles, that move silently to and fro, here and there and everywhere.

The Russian ballet of "*Scheherazade*" is to be performed to-night, and a long procession of all kinds and conditions of vehicles, shabbiest "*comfortables*" and luxurious coroneted coaches, are bearing down upon the Hofopera, and hundreds of well-dressed people are vanishing behind the refulgent glory shed by a thousand crystal candelabra. This particular ballet appeals thoroughly to aristocratic Vienna's taste, it is so splendid, so beautiful, so thrilling, so passionate, so full of voluptuous suggestiveness, so certain *never* to prove boring!

Not far away is another picture characteristic of the city. In a dim recess of that notorious, discreet, much-frequented confectioner's, where assignations are made, in whose precincts scores of lustful, nervous, expectant, and high-born folk daily foregather, crouches an eagle-nosed, shifty-eyed, yellow-toothed old hag of title who, despite the fact that her bonnet has seen better days, and her dress is dowdy, is a venerated grandmother in one of the most conservative and most ecclesiastically and imperially honoured Austrian feudal families. Of recent years misfortune overtook her, and, being too proud to beg, and cherishing a desire for the good things of life, she undertook for a handsome remuneration, to conduct clandestine love affairs, to be a medium for the transfer of compromising notes, and excellently does she fulfil her mission.

There are two places in the Hapsburg capital wrapped in grossest darkness where there is not even so much as a spark of life, or joy, or light. One is behind the scowling walls of the Imperial palace—*die Burg*—where the old man who is paid to bear the responsibility of others, the feeble old man whose heart is so hardened that it cannot break, the miserable, lonely old man who can boast but one real friend in the whole wide world—and she a woman not "morally particular"—waits to be taken to the only place where he can enjoy the society of his equals—the Capuchin Vault.* The second place of darkness is that remote outer quarter, which lies on the outskirts of the city, beneath the shadow of smoke-blackened, dominating factory

* Once, when an Austrian noble had been discoursing upon the impossibility of associating with those he did not regard as his equals, it is said, the Emperor, Franz-Joseph, rebuked him, saying, "If I, like you, confined myself to the society of my equals I should have to go down into the Capuchin Vault"—the burial-place of the Hapsburgs.

chimneys. In this gloomy locality dwell, to quote from Menzel's "*Reise nach Oestreich*," "the lazaroni of Vienna, the Sclavonians of the *Neutraer Comitat*, and other Magyar, Croatian, and Wallachian brotherhoods of beggars (*Lumpengesindel*), whose figures are marked in every limb by serfage—by something that the free sons of the West must see to understand, who are clothed in coarsest sackcloth, and have long knotted hair—human beings with a physiognomy truly bestial, covered with swinish dirt." *

Rarely do these poor Slavs, these submerged unfortunates, intrude themselves upon the notice of their careless, cheerful rulers. Now and again one may catch sight of a Croat boy, a hawker of vegetables, clad, Orlando-like, in the sheepskin cloak and rakish round hat of his homeland. But the sheepskin will have lost its whiteness, there will be no pretty posey of wild flowers in the headgear, the thin, wistful little face will have become sallow and unhealthy, and the piping childish voice will have almost lost its Slavic, melodious cadence. Or, flitting swiftly past, presenting a curious contrast to the rubicund, jovial, stall-fed, properly paid crowd of Teutonic artisans and shopkeepers—invariably indicated as the proofs positive of the excellent working of the paternal system of government—one sometimes notices a Czech, cold, calm and composed, shuffling hopelessly, aimlessly along, on dreary padded, sandalled feet, or a Slovak girl will drift by, robbed of her youth, her health, the tranquil serenity characteristic of her people. At midnight these children of the Slav nations which "enjoy" Teutonic or Magyar "protection" and rule, now and then may be seen huddled together in their worn-out sheepskins to escape the biting wind, beneath the stone effigies of the saints and angels which surround the walls of St. Stephen's. "But what of that," laughed a buxom member of the "*Fratschelweiber*," † "are they any better, these Slavs, than swine, and swine do not need coddling!"

Nevertheless, down in their dark lairs, beside the belching factory chimneys, where they sweat for twelve or thirteen hours out of the twenty-four, to gain from four to six crowns per week, —and this mighty army of the submerged is growing apace—thousands upon thousands of the Slav "swine" are beginning furiously to think. They are commencing to ponder on things

* Menzel wrote in 1832: a Teuton, he saw only the beast in the Slavs, and did not perceive the peril to his race from their oppression. For an excellent account of present-day Vienna, see V. Gayda's "Modern Austria."

† The fishwives of Vienna, who are an indispensable part of the city's life.

as they exist. They are beginning to wonder why a certain class, a certain race, has the right to possess everything, whilst another race, *their* race, has nothing. To wonder also, how even a Slav "dog" can be expected to keep himself, or herself, alive on twenty-five *hellers* per day, and to sleep, without light or air, in a vile doss-house—*massenhotel*—in a bare room along with, probably from one to two dozen fellow outcasts, the price of such lodging being twenty *hellers* (2*d.*) per night!

If not too revolting, too degrading, too woeful a picture for the civilized reader, let us try to visualize a typical room and its occupants in this dreadful locality of "gay" Vienna. The room is situated in one of these *massenhotels*, where innumerable passages and obscure stairways lead to numbered doors, opening into dens too loathsome almost to speak of. This particular room has been sublet by its proprietor to twenty-seven people, and each of these individuals is called a bettgeher—a bettgeher being one who rents a bed, or half a bed, or a fourth part of a bed, going shares in it with companions of either sex. Two women and two men occupy one of the many beds in this particular den, each paying fifty *hellers* (5*d.*) per week for his or her share of the couch. One of the women, a Croat spinner, is coughing her lungs away in phthisis, the other, a Slovene seamstress, is smitten with an even more terrible and contagious malady, and neither of them has yet arrived at the age of thirty. Their masculine companions in squalor are Poles, employed in a neighbouring factory. Jews, Slovaks, Czechs, and a Tsigane violinist pay toll for the other beds, which, though pushed closely together, leave scarcely enough open space in which to turn round. A feeble gas jet illuminates this human purgatory. The walls are whitewashed and smeared with grime and grease and smoke, and tattered, sour-smelling garments are everywhere suspended from nails stuck into the crumbling plaster. The sickening warm odour of diseased, unclean bodies pollutes what air there is, it is a place where the fresh air and breath of the world has never penetrated. Not one of the female occupants retains decency or virtue, for here virtue is always saleable and fetches, even in bad times, the price of a meal. A meal with such creatures, consists usually of watery potato soup and a small glass of noxious brandy. If children are born, they must either go back to the God who gave them, or their mothers get rid of them by abandoning them on the doorstep of some foundling hospital. Such, then, is "a home," such then is "life" in the submerged Slavonic working people's quarter, of light, bright joyous Vienna!

And every Maundy Thursday, up to the last year or two,

following the ancient custom of his ancestors, the Emperor Francis-Joseph, kneels in state before the high altar in St. Stephen's Church and washes the already well-scrubbed feet of twelve poor old men, much, presumably to the spiritual edification of the great cardinals, fat abbés, and pretty women of his court. And as he creeps from one disinfected pauper foot to another disinfected pauper foot, sentimental tears drop from the aristocratic eyes of the well-born people who are "so happy in themselves, so attached to their existing institutions, so mild and kindly in their dispositions towards others, so free from malignant passions, so simple minded in the belief of their own religion, so preserved by the strong hand of government from ever hearing controversial discussion!"

Truly these Austrian Teutons are "a thoroughly healthy and lovable people."

So let the rich, dark, soft, purple of their night close in upon them.

* * * * * *

VIENNA, SEPTEMBER, 1915.

The shadow of doom, the shadow of the Hohenzollern Bird of Prey, has fallen upon the eyrie of the decrepit Hapsburg eagle, and for the Dual Monarchy, what remains but disaster? At the close of the present awful world war what can Austria-Hungary hope for? Should Germany be the conqueror the Hapsburg Empire will lose its independence and become merely a vassal of Prussia. Should the Allies win the day, Russia will most certainly demand emancipation for the Slavonic nations at present under the Hapsburg Crown. Indolence and selfishness have done their work in this ancient holy Roman Empire, and its venerable Kaiser Franz-Joseph—King of Hungary—whose tongue he can scarcely speak—King of Bohemia—whose people he fears—King of Dalmatia, of Croatia, of Slavonia, of Galicia, of Illyria, Grand Duke of Carinthia, of Carniola, of Bukovina, of Moravia, whose Slavonic inhabitants he has scorned, taxed, and oppressed, will—unless death spares him the humiliation—be forced to assent to the desires and demands of either the Czar of Russia, or the Emperor of Germany.

But though face to face with ruin, the Austrians still continue their merry-making. Though served with war bread as heavy as lead, and as indigestible as indiarubber, they still go on making light of unpalatable facts; though momentarily saddened by the wan faces and crippled limbs of their wounded, they yet manage to preserve their cheerful equanimity. Do not worry, do not fret, they argue; let things go as they may!

A draft of reinforcements, *en route* to entrain for the Galician front, is marching down the Ring-strasse. What are they singing? Listen—

> "*Langsam voran—langsam voran!*
> *Damit die Landwehr halt folgen kann!*" *

It would be erroneous to suppose that the Austrians are not perturbed at the way matters are going. But, then, there are some things which cannot be set right or put straight. For example, the steeple of St. Stephen's declines a little from the perpendicular, and the Viennese climate is often intolerable, and the odours which, in hot weather, emanate from the Quai on the Donau Canal are unsavoury, and the street sweepers fail to lay the dust, and it is decidedly unfortunate that their Government never realized before how risky it is to dance barefooted upon the sharp points of Slav and Prussian lances, swords, daggers and revolts, but a parting glimpse into the most fashionable *café* in Vienna, in the autumn of 1915, may give some idea of how affairs are at present progressing between the proud, careless, Austrians and their thorough-going Prussian masters and drivers.

Three Austrian and three Prussian officers are drinking at one of the marble-topped tables. Erect, deep-chested, steelly-eyed, hard of muscle, stout, loud-voiced, and vulgar, the soldiers of the "All Highest Over Lord"—the Kaiser Wilhelm II. of Germany—sit, sword on table, tossing bock after bock down their receptive gullets. Nothing is more obvious than the contempt which they manifest for their allies, who lounge inertly against the velvet cushions of their seats, silent and smiling. The disease from which their nation suffers is apparent in their every movement. Even the manner with which they bring their tankards to their lips suggests a supine acceptance of the inevitable. With politely inexpressive eyes, these sons of the tottering old *Koaser* † of Oestreich gaze vacantly through their monocles at the virile bestialities of these knights without a pedigree, and feel in their tunic pockets whether or not they have the wherewithal to pay for their own and the Prussians' drinks. Not an attempt is now made by the visitors to humour the vanity of their Austrian brothers-in-arms. They did so some months ago, but do so no longer. Nor do they exhibit the slightest effort to hide the fact that they regard their hosts as representatives of a miserable and fast-decaying empire, soon to

* "Go easy, my lads, so that the Landwehr may have time to join up with us."

† Familiar Viennese pronunciation of the word Kaiser.

become absorbed into the new glorious and invincible Hohenzollern Empire, which is destined to stretch from the coast of Britain to the Mediterranean, and from the heart of Russia to the centre of France, and beyond—over the face of a Germanized and re-organized world.

One of the Austrians ventures to offer a timid objection, but is ruthlessly shouted down.

"My good comrade, think you that the All Highest can permit again your amiable and exalted, but quite incapable government to rule your country as hitherto? Ach, no, Austria-Hungary must naturally soon become a valuable, and, of course, self-ruling portion of the newly-about-to-be-born German Empire! (as are all the fine states now within the German Imperial Federation). Your worthy, and very excellent, and entrancingly beautiful land will then form an indissoluble link between Prussia and Constantinople. Then we will together *civilize* your swinish Slav subjects! Poor fellows, is it possible that not even yet do you understand the meaning of German *machtpolitik!*" (world-power politics).

The "poor fellows" pay the bill, and the tips, and the company make ready for departure. From the hatstand pegs the possessors of sixteen quarterings—and not much else—respectfully take down the grey blue coats of the supermen, and hold them for the latter to stagger into, and, preceded by the Prussians, all six men pass out through the big swing door into the Kärtnerstrasse. A gloomy dusk has fallen, and beneath the light of a street lamp, stands the pitiful wreck of that which had been, only a brief time back, as handsome, as upstanding, as Lucifer-proud a young Magyar *Csikos* as ever the Alföld bred. In his tattered, gore- and mud-stained uniform, his wounded head and face swathed in bandages, he presents a picture of misery incarnated.

Overtaken by weakness he has been forced to seek for support against the lamp-post, and two ladies who are passing hesitate and come forward, with kindly solicitation, to render him some assistance. But one of the tipsy, swaggering German officers is before them. Irritable from drink, intoxicated by the thought of his own and his Germanic Emperor's importance, he suddenly discovers substance for a row in the fact that the wounded, nearly unconscious youth has omitted to give him the salute. With fury, hurling the ladies off the curb, he rushes upon his victim, and deals him a cruel blow fair across his poor mangled jaw. "Son of a bitch, is it credible you do not recognize in *me* a Prussian officer, do you not know——?" But the Csikos of the Magyar Alföld is beyond grasping this piece of unnecessary information. He lies in the gutter, a mere heartrending heap of

greyish rags, and the officers go on their ways rattling their swords, and clinking their spurs.

With tears of womanly anger and pity, one of the ladies pulls herself together and stoops down over the livid boy face, and as she does so, a couple of policemen put in an appearance, and inquire the meaning of the disturbance. Thus addressed the girl glances at the fat, good-natured official visage, and gives her version of the occurrence. She speaks faultless German, but the fact that she is an Englishwoman cannot be concealed. The policeman, however, displays no rudeness, he smiles blandly, and mutters, "*Losst's gehen wie's geht!*" ("Leave things as they are!")—the noble English Fraulein had better go home quietly, and, if she is sufficiently wise, refrain in future from trying to mind the business of other people. This assuredly is a terrible time—*nicht wahr?*

For a moment, just as he is being lifted into a vehicle, the Alfölder opens his eyes, and stares into the tear-filled ones of the English girl, and with an effort, essays to raise her hand to his lips, while the gaping crowd listens to a wounded Magyar whispering—in English—"My thanks to you, lady; yours is a good country. I speak a little of your tongue, for I was in Canada!" The driver cracks his whip and jolts off to the hospital, and the English girl and her friend make their way to the Home for English Governesses, in the Giselastrasse, where, to the honour of the Austrian Government, many derelict daughters of Britain now enjoy State protection and State courtesy.

The evening has brought rain, and a drizzling mist obscures the great Hapsburg Eagle that reposes with outspread pinions on the tiled roof of St. Stephen's. If it had but life and could soar to freedom, if it could but wrench itself from the grip of the powers that bind and hold it, this Eagle might again dominate the kingdoms of the Empire. But it cannot, and there is the end of it.

Mostar the Capital of Herzegovina.

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CHAPTER VIII

BUDAPEST: THE GAY CITY OF THE MAGYARS

It is spring in the pleasant city of Budapest. Along the broad and lengthy boulevard, known to all proud Budapest citizens as "The Andrassy-ut," the trees are rustling merrily in the warm breeze. Yet, not five days ago their half unfolded buds were heavy with snow, and the windows of the houses and *cafés* were closed, bolted, barred, lined with white woollen paddings and rendered air-impervious by heavy wolf-skin curtains. Spring comes in two days to Budapest, so its inhabitants declare, and they would appear, in this case, to speak truly.

It is the loudly proclaimed belief of all the Magyars that their capital, and, indeed, they themselves, cannot be equalled. Paris may, perhaps, but the chances are against it, possess parks as full of flowers, boulevards as wide, shops as wonderful as these of Budapest; London may be somewhat larger, but in size only can it rival the Hungarian metropolis.

Spring everywhere means fuss, but in Budapest it means fuss extraordinary. At the first decided twitter of the blackbirds, with the first warm sunray, the "*Kávéház*" (*café*) owners take down their wolf-skin curtains, fling wide their six-month hermetically sealed windows, hurl every available table, chair, spittoon, carpet strip, flower pot, and elderly English, German or French journal out on to the small platforms which are attached to every *café*. Gorgeously painted iron railings suddenly appear, and are placed around these wooden platforms, and the footpaths straight away lose two-thirds of their width, but the pedestrians do not object; it would be useless to do so, the city is one huge enclosed "*Kávéház*" in winter, one immense *Kávé* (Garden) in summer and against a Budapest "*Kávéház*" there is no law. But of these *cafés* more later.

The stranger strolling along the streets for the first time will frequently find it necessary to decide whether he will continue his promenade, and risk injury, or enter a *café* enclosure, and order a glass of coffee. If he is wise he will select the latter course.

All who have read descriptions of Hungary by Hungarian writers know that their capital is a beautiful city, magnificently situated on both sides of the Danube, possessing seven bridges of extraordinary beauty, and a palace on the Buda Hills overlooking the river, which is almost unrivalled for the splendour of its architecture. Most of us have heard that Buda was an ancient seat of learning, which was destroyed again and again by its traditional enemies, the Turks, who liked the place so well that they took up their quarters there for nearly one hundred and fifty years.

Most people have grasped these facts about Budapest, and the things they do *not* know, they imagine. The generality of English people darkly suspect the city of being somewhat barbaric, a belief which has half its origin in fact, and the other half in Vienna—that jealous step-sister of the Magyar city, whose interest lies in keeping all would-be admirers and useful friends, *i.e.* tourists and traders, from floating away from her down the Danube.

Truth to tell, Budapest citizens are the most curiously mixed people in Europe—in them the East and the West, the North and the South, have met, and the result is interesting, if not altogether wholesome; but the ordinary inhabitant—the man in the street—is to-day more of an Oriental than anything else, too often robbed of the finest characteristics of his Eastern forefathers, and possessing but few of the sterner, stronger qualities of the more Western races. As with the people in the mass, so with the city itself.

Should the foreigner chance to get his first view of Budapest in its early summer dress, and from the St. Margit Bridge, he may consider himself fortunate, and he will probably never swerve from his first boundless admiration of the place. That scene of beauty will remain with him for ever. The dazzling, sweeping river, rushing beneath his feet, the brilliant blueness of the sky, the fresh clearness of the air. He will remember, as long as he lives, old Buda standing on its hills, the great golden-crowned palace, the terraced gardens, the ramparts, the ancient cathedral, with Pest across the water, bathed in a haze of sunlight, and he will carry with him, till beauty can no longer gladden eye and heart, the remembrance of the lovely little island of St. Margit, where once upon a time the fair daughter of King Bela IV. had her cloister home. Bela was a brave Magyar thirteenth-century king, who "having the help of heaven," drove the Tartar invaders of his kingdom back along the road by which they had come, and, in gratitude for the heavenly help received, he gave his young daughter to God, and built her a cloister on the island

which now bears her name. Many hundreds of years have gone by, and now the townsfolk flock in numbers to the island to drink coffee, and devour excellent cakes, under the lime trees, while music is played, and the children romp among the magnolia bushes and the flowers. Yet still there broods over the place a strange and holy peacefulness—God's smile once shone upon it long, long ago, and the radiance of His smile will never pass.

Few foreigners are lucky enough to receive their first impressions of Budapest under such auspicious conditions. It is in the noisy street and along the boulevards that most people form their earliest opinion of the town and its people, and, as the spectator feels himself uplifted above the common vulgarities of life, and becomes conscious of the mighty past of Hungary and of the Magyars, and develops a certain sympathy with their pride of race, when viewing the city from the St. Margit Bridge, so does he experience a lack of these sentiments when sitting in a "*Kávéház*" enclosure, or strolling on the Budapest boulevards.

The greater part of the crowd which saunters to and fro along the pavements, and on the Corso, is decidedly unprepossessing in appearance—it would do credit to Margate on a Whit Monday—and judging from the predominance of *café-au-lait* complexions, lengthy noses, and rotund waistcoats, it might easily be mistaken for a crowd in Stamboul or Jerusalem.

Are these the Hungarians whom hitherto the stranger has been led to believe are more at home on a horse than on their legs? Are these female monstrosities, who, in the words of the Psalmist, strut by "with proud looks and high stomachs," these ladies whose sallow throats are clasped by strings of pearls, are these the daughters of Hungarian sportsmen and warriors? Are these the children of the far-stretching "*puszta*," where, on swiftly flying steeds, they ride, pursued by the swifter winds? Are these the women, to whom the passionate Magyar love songs are sung by splendid fierce-eyed men, "glorious as Apollos," in their scarlet and embroidered linen dresses? Are these waddling dames, these sensual-looking, pretty young girls, these flat-footed, diamond-ringed *jeunesse-doré*, these corpulent, oily, paterfamilias, the descendants of the tribes of Arpad? No! Should King Mátijás, "the Truthteller," the "Mighty Huntsman," whose statue stands across the river on the palace terrace, return to life, and stalk with his hounds and retainers along the streets of his city, he too might inquire—"Who are these people, and from whence?" But the probability is, he would not need to inquire. Mátijás knew an Oriental when he met one: he had not fought the Turks for nothing!

The fact is—it is the Oriental Jews, and *not* the Hungarians,

who have the upper hand in Budapest at present, and King Mátijás would find them an even more difficult problem to solve than the Turks.

Where have the real Hungarians gone ? Out into the open country, on to the wide "*puszta*," to their old castles and vast estates, to their horses and cattle, to their sport, to where they can live their honest, egotistical, virile lives undisturbed. They retain, however, their ancestral town houses, which they visit in autumn and in the late spring. These old mansions are mostly situated in Buda, in the vicinity of the town park, or round the National Museum. Half hidden behind high garden walls, or within great courtyards, they seem to discourage any attempts at intimacy from without, and their inmates are but seldom to be met on the boulevards. Tall, clear-skinned men and women may be seen arriving at and departing from the entrance doors ; but of these nobles, the ordinary middle-class or Jewish townsfolk know almost nothing. Between the classes there is a great gulf fixed. Aristocrats rent boxes in the opera, places at concerts ; they may be seen at their best during the Budapest May races, and tantalizing whispers reach the ears of the fat, aspiring bedizened ladies of the Corso, about the glory of balls and suppers given by these nobles, whose female kind wear such seemingly inexpensive frocks, but who turn so haughtily aside from the children of Jacob.

Now and then there is an aristocratic marriage in the big church of the Basilika, or in the cathedral, and then these scornful ones burst forth into a glory, which cause even the Israelites of Budapest to look with envy. It is a beautiful sight, a grand Magyar wedding, for on such an occasion the guests don their national and family costumes, as Hungarian nobles.

The men's dress consists of a richly coloured velvet jacket called an "Attila," after the name of the ancient chieftain of the Huns. This "Attila" reaches to the knees, is tight fitting, heavily embroidered with gold and precious stones, and bordered at the neck and wrists with rich sable. Round the waist, over a silken vest, and under the "Attila," is a wide gold and gem-set belt, from which hangs a short, curved sword, the hilt and sheath of which is of gold, studded with jewels. On the shoulders glitters a massive chain, and on the wearer's head towers a "Csákó" of sable, surmounted by a lofty and jewelled aigrette ; closely fitting silk breeches and high spurred boots complete the costume. And the women's dress is not less picturesque. It is of heavy gold and gem-encrusted velvet, or brocade, which flows round the feet and terminates in a sweeping train. The waist is encased in a deeply pointed velvet and

jewelled bodice, over a white lace *chemisette*, *decolletée* in the extreme. Over all rises an imposing head-dress, resembling a coronet in shape. Yes, they can spoil the spoilers of old Egypt, these Hungarian nobles, when they see fit to do so, but neither they nor their splendid garments are much in evidence in Budapest.

But the Jews swarm, and the Hungarians are fewer than might be expected; there are still many other strange peoples and races to be met in an everyday crowd. Red-fezed Bosnians, debonair Roumanians, said to be one of the handsomest races in Europe; Slovaks from the Carpathians, sad-faced, gentle and patient. These wear whitish linen or woollen breeches, have their feet swathed in strips of homespun linen, over which are raw cowhide sandals, fastened to the ankles by leather thongs. On their shoulders they have huge, shaggy sheepskins, uncured, and not always clean, and on their heads are small black felt hats, trimmed at one side with a bunch of bright flowers. Then there are officers in long blue cloaks, or short fur-edged tunics, spurred and bristling with military accoutrements. Serbs, in height above the average, clad in white, walking with an easy stride, suggestive of well-guarded independence. Bulgars, loud-voiced, rough; and flitting here and there like poppies through a cornfield, are Magyar peasant girls, their many scarlet petticoats, reaching barely to their knees, standing out as full and crisply as any ballet skirt, their shapely feet and legs encased in high red Hessian boots, their ample bosoms swelling under snowy chemisettes, their long black hair hanging far below their waists, each plait of it entwined with multi-coloured ribbons, their soaring, half-moon shaped, sequin-bespangled head-dresses, glittering in the sunshine. Also there are the *Schwabs*, German settlers from the Buda hinterland; a community as individually drab as their dull stuff, heavy costumes, and black kerchiefs; their chief interest in life being to sell vegetables, and—eat! Croats are here, too, in beautiful white linen clothing, embroidered with a hundred colours, and Galician Poles, in flaming, wonderful shawls. Every now and again some Ruthenian Jews go by—thin-visaged, shifty-eyed, wearing high black caps, long black *Kaftans*, white stockings, and broad-toed slippers. Their oily side curls proclaim them subjects of the Dual Monarchy (Russian Jews being forbidden to indulge their racial taste for long hair), and lastly, there are objectionable, green-hatted, spectacled German tourists, full of self-importance, gasping for knowledge, armed with guide books and kodaks, posting picture cards in every blue, Magyar-crowned, letter box. Decidedly they have got somewhat out of hand here.

Budapest is one of the few capitals where they can exhibit their kultur in its full bloom. Observing a judicious parsimony with respect to tips, they occupy the best hotel bedrooms, and gobble at the best tables.

The city, like its citizens, presents a curious mixture of interests. Very handsome are its new buildings, and their decorations—as a rule Byzantian in style—are full of colour. Beautiful are the Mosaic covered walls, the gilded gates, doors, and railings. Very wide its boulevards, and dangerously swift its trams. These are among the first objects a stranger learns to notice and to avoid! Motor cars dart about with marvellous dexterity, on whichever side of the street they happen to prefer. Notice these things, spend a morning staring into the shop windows, wondering how people can be found to pay the exorbitant prices demanded. Observe everything, and then stop to draw breath and consider. Why does all this glitter and luxury and newness "get on one's nerves"? Why does the city, in spite of its beauty, seem to possess so little dignity? Only one quarter of Budapest may be described as really pleasing and satisfying—namely, the little collection of old-world houses and streets round the exquisite cathedral of King Mátijás on Buda Hill. That one little spot nothing can vulgarize or render unpicturesque. Its ancient Buda is like a little old Bavarian noblewoman knitting in the sunlight.

The new and wealthy city of the Danube is, in fact, just like one of its own big and opulent Jewesses. Neither knows how best to get rid of her money, and both are vaguely conscious of not being quite—quite—"the thing," somehow or other. They try so hard to be "*gentile*." Anything ordinary stinks in their nostrils. How many times a day does the foreigner hear the warning hissed in his ear: "Go not *there*—it is *not fine!*" To be "*not fine*" is indeed an unforgiveable offence.

The well-bred Magyars, in their roomy old houses, understand how to live in comfort and dignity, but the middle class inhabitants, of doubtful origin, do not know how to be at ease. Once out of the public eye "gentility" is laid away with their best clothes, to be taken out only when the wearers walk abroad again, and in its place reigns domestic wrangling—dirty wrappers, tooth-picks, down-at-heel slippers and frowsy heads.

Budapest folk are as partial to their *Kávéházs* as the Parisians are to their *cafés*. And their *Kávéházs* are as fine, if not finer, than any of the *cafés* in the City of Light. In Budapest in some streets there is a *Kávéház* at almost every third house, and at every street corner. They are never empty, they are never shut. The stranger speculates vaguely how they all manage to clear a

profit, so luxurious are they, so filled with music and light, and life. The *Kávéházs* are to these good people what the Clubs are to the Londoners, with this difference, however, that Londoners do not always belong to a Club, but Budapest citizens always belong to a *Kávéház*.

In the Magyar capital birds of a feather frequent the same *Kávéház*. Do not look for a musician amongst doctors, or in a doctor's *Kávéház!* Do not hope to meet a man of letters drinking his evening beer at the same place as a sportsman! There are *Kávéházs* for old fogies, and for young dandies, for rogues and honest men, for fools and wise, for poor and rich, for Slavs and Teutons. Only for women—there is no *Kávéház*. It is "not fine" for a Hungarian lady to resort to these centres of gossip and refreshment—at any rate alone. Fair ones, therefore, demolish cakes, with alarming prodigality, at the famous confectioner's—Gerbaud. Their supreme end—immense stoutness—can as surely be hastened by creamed chocolate as by "*Salvator*" beer. In the *Kávéházs* every kind of business and scandal is discussed. If a man has a horse to sell, a poem to write, a plain and "difficult" daughter to marry, a friend to cheat, an opinion to air, a secret to betray, a wife to hoodwink, an opera to compose, a company to float, he does so at his *Kávéház*. The *Kávéházs* have laid hold of the life of Budapest, as they have laid hold of the pavements. Every *Kávéház* boasts its own gipsy orchestra, its billiard tables, its card tables, its "specialities."

The Budapest cinemas or *Mozis* are lavishly perfumed, and it is just as well, for few crowds can be so odorous as a Budapest one. Over-heated, velvet-chaired, resplendent with gilt and paint, the *Mozis* are most successful, and, indeed, scornful rivals of the theatres. From five every afternoon till nearly midnight they are crammed to overflowing with crowds of all sorts. From wealthy *flanéurs*, who can pay one crown for a place in a box, down to humble folk who for forty filler, endeavour to blink through a terrific blood-curdling drama, or a screaming farce, from an agonizingly short but cheap distance. There are *Mozis* of all kinds and to suit all tastes. "White" *Mozis* for young girls. Budapest maidens are particularly wide awake, however, and at heart dislike and resent the "white" *Mozis*. There are vicious, red-peppery *Mozis* for wicked old rakes, male and female. *Mozis* with instructive tendencies, *Mozis* to make people laugh. There are *Mozis* for the aristocrats who venture cautiously out of their Buda fastnesses to view such plays as may perchance, not be quite "fine" enough to please the flashy, fleshy Budapest dames of the new order. And about the *Mozis* of the people it would be wisest not to speak—their very notice bills would

utterly scandalize the "respectable" British matron. But nations and classes have their special tastes in *Mozis*, and in *Kávéházs*.

Whether they be Jews, Turks, infidels or heretics, people native to Magyarland are born musicians. Music is the one *sure* thing which can lift them above their egoism and their food; it is the one thing which can lower them to a place amongst the devils.

Did God teach them music, or was the devil their master?

Go into the big church of the Basilika and hear them render the IX Symphony of Beethoven, hear the last triumphant *Finale* of that tremendous masterpiece, pealing, thundering, ringing, down the shadowy aisles, soaring upwards through the domed roof,—hear this, and you think that the people who can make this music must be half angelic. Such music cannot be imagined by evil. Yet—do not be too sure!

Then choose a spring evening when the Danube flows in a deep, swift, purple flood under a violet, star-spangled sky. One of those nights when the lights on Buda Hill seem like jewels blazing against a velvet background; when the regal city of Arpad lies steeped in moonlight—a veritable fairyland; when the streets are full of laughing, joyous crowds; when work is put away, and everyone sets out to do just what the spirit moves him to do—that spirit which lurks in the gipsy music.

Then imagine an open air *kávé* garden. Any of them will do, but choose for preference one on the island of St. Margit.

Scattered here and there under the trees, and close to the river's edge are groups of little tables surrounded by people. They are ordinary typical Budapest folk. Probably not one of them could tell you who his or her grandfather was. Grandfathers, and all the past, have been left far behind on the path by which these excellent "arrivers" have travelled from the land of the sunrise to present prosperity. Fate—or the God of Jacob—and an eye for business led them westwards, and the flesh pots of the original inhabitants have been found eminently satisfactory.

Glasses tinkle, white teeth flash, and long, obliquely set black eyes glance and gleam in the moonlight. Ringed hands and white shoulders jerk time to the rising, falling, wailing, rushing music.

The gipsies are playing!

Crouched in a dark bunch on the platform, their swarthy faces are but dimly seen. The light only falls on their leader,—a lean, lantern-jawed individual with greasy wisps of matted hair falling over his shoulders, and half-closed eyes. His long fingers spring like wires upon the violin strings, his bow sweeps convulsively

up and down, his body writhes and twists, he is leading his audience when and how he will.

Shouting, wailing, singing, laughing, screaming, in fury, or frenzy, his music preaches to his full-lipped, materialistic listeners the gospel of the gipsy—passion, freedom, life, sunshine, wanderings, change, death, and nothingness! It is the gospel of the gipsy as well as the gospel of the tent-maker poet of Persia. Enjoy life now, for after all there is nothing!

And only a few yards distant is a little grave under a curiously carved stone. Below it sleeps Saint Margit, who, legend says, "dare not smell the flowers of earth, lest she lose thereby the sweetness of the flowers of heaven."

Life in Budapest is not always particularly pleasant or comfortable, as we count pleasure or comfort. Love of order is not a Budapestian characteristic. Punctuality is an unknown virtue. People of the upper classes live very much in the same way, of course, as do other Europeans of the same order. But the Budapest middle classes are primitive in their way of doing things. They muddle through their domestic arrangements somehow. They employ numerous servants who are for ever cleaning and dusting without apparently much result. These servants mean well—very well, but they are inveterate gossips, and bantam cocks are not in it when it comes to fighting, and it comes to fighting every day. Sometimes these quarrels take place amongst the members of the family, sometimes amongst the servants. Cries, yells, shrieks, sobs, the crashing of doors, the smashing of —the Lord knows *what!*—announce to the apathetic, because accustomed, neighbours, that an argument is proceeding. But let the stranger beware of offering advice or sympathy. Let him maintain the utmost impartiality. For within ten minutes, the foes, whether masculine or feminine, will have dissolved into floods of tears, and be weeping forgiveness upon one another's bosoms!

Privacy in a Budapest apartment or villa is rather difficult to obtain. Bedrooms lead to other bedrooms and to saloons. And, during the daytime, it is usual to keep communicating doors wide open. Bedrooms are regarded as sitting-rooms, toilet necessities are hidden away in the morning, the beds are covered with rugs to appear like divans, and a thoroughfare is opened for the public to pass through.

Hungarian and Budapest food, while excellent, is somewhat rich. Unlike their German friends the Hungarians principally use butter in their cooking. Their cakes and sweets are perhaps the best in the world. But in private houses this good food is not always served well, and a prettily decorated dinner table is very unusual.

The little "niceties" of life are still somewhat neglected, even in aristocratic homes. Pretty clothes are for public, not family, delectation. And in these matters the primitiveness of the people is most noticeable.

Hotels are modern, luxurious, commodious, clean, well-lighted, but they are—foolishly for themselves and their city—unreasonably expensive. Their prices are considerably higher than the prices charged by the best Monte Carlo hotels at the height of the Riviera season! Things which modern tourists regard as necessities, are extras, and must be paid for separately. For example, a hot bath in a Budapest hotel costs three crowns, a cup of black coffee two crowns, and so on. Then, again, the attendance is bad. Greed and incompetence distinguish the hotel servants. *Hoteliers*, too, have a nasty trick of "making mistakes," advantageous to themselves, when calculating up clients' bills, and of being insolent when these mistakes are pointed out.

As to the future who may speculate? The splendid palace on the Buda Hills which Hungary rebuilt at such cost for her king still remains deserted. It has not been occupied for any length of time since the day when the murdered Queen Elizabeth left it for ever. The citizens, in common with all Hungarians, still mourn for the Queen as their one powerful friend and benefactress in a dynasty which despised and despises them. In the vast, echoing state rooms there is only one corner which human love and sympathy seem to have warmed. It is the wing where this strange, beautiful woman lived and suffered. Here everything remains as it was when she left it. Her books still lie on the table, the flowers are still in the vases, her children's playthings—the Crown Prince Rudolf's toy sword and helmet, his baby sister's dolls—all remain undisturbed. In one room is kept the still bloodstained dress which she wore when she was stabbed at Territet, her famous fans, her letters, photographs of her favourite hunters, and sporting souvenirs. Some of her happiest days were spent amongst her Hungarian subjects. She loved and understood their fiery, egotistical, passionate, wild, faulty characters. She shared in their love of sport and freedom. She recognized the better qualities of the cosmopolitan Budapest citizens. And it was a sad day for Hungary when she died.

CHAPTER IX

SCENES IN FIUME, THE SEAPORT OF HUNGARY

It is summer, the midday sun breaks white over the dazzling, blistered walls of Old Rjeka. The blue, island-dotted avenue of the Adriatic lies slumbering, warm, breathless, very still. The blue sky overhead sleeps also, the heat is overpowering. High through all the vast blueness, high above the headlands and harbours, rise the mountains, their pearly outlines circling, like a bodyguard, about their snow-crowned sovereign, Monte Magiore. The green and white and scarlet blinds along the Via del Corso, the Piazza Dante, and the Viale Francesco Déak, are carefully drawn, for modern and wealthy Fiume can well afford to protect itself against sunstroke. Behind these blinds in the handsome, brand new, four-storied dwellings, overlooking the port and the open sea beyond the Molo Maria Teresa, leisured beauties of the aristocracy and rich merchant classes are preserving their complexions, while less fortunate people pant and sweat and fret in the fiery glare. The obsequious porters at the doors of the Grand Hotel de l'Europe, and the Corsia Déak, are languidly on the look out for luncheon customers. In the fashionable *cafés*—the Grand, and the Schenk—the tables are crowded with well-to-do business men and officers, absorbing all sorts of liquids and the daily newspapers. Colour, gorgeous colour, lurks everywhere, in every sharp purple shadow, in all the whiteness. Colour, pulsing life permeates earth and sky and sea, is splashed along the wide, clean streets, is dancing over the docks and bays with the brilliantly hued shipping, is blinding in the flower-strewn public parks.

A busy, bustling place is New Fiume, with its fine plate-glass windowed stores, its noisy, money-coining factories, its Naval College, its warehouses, timber yards, oil refineries, its shipyards, and swiftly moving electric trams, which make the lumbering ox-waggons, meandering beyond their proper sphere in the ancient precincts of the Old Town, seem curiously out of place. Thirty years ago the city was merely a big village, to-day the muffled clamour of thousands of hammers beats ceaselessly from its great

industries, and loudest of all sounds the hammers which ply in the most important of all these factories, the one which was founded, not so very many years ago, by the man who, as a poor Lancashire grammar school boy, dreamt dreams which here came true. Whitehead perfected his torpedo invention at Fiume in 1866, when, probably, even he did not realize what a potent influence the invention would have in the world's future wars.

An interesting spectacle the launching of Whitehead's torpedo must have been for the thousands of warrior spirits which haunt Tarsatica! How many ghostly, battle-scarred faces must have watched and brooded over the creation of "*la bestia*"! Half-naked, tattoed Illyrian, Gaetian and Dacian tribesmen; eagle-eyed, hook-nosed, lantern-jawed Roman legionaries; swiftly moving, vivacious followers of Charlemagne; cross-crested mercenaries of the Polo episcopate; gallant vassals of the Counts Duino and Wallsee; plumed men-at-arms of the dare-devil altogether picturesque Frangipani; Knights of St. John; black-eyed compatriots and brother corsairs of the valiant, if atrociously cruel, Oroudj Reis, who, with all his "horse-tail" bedecked sea-rovers, "died properly, sword in hand, after drinking the perfumed sherbet of martyrdom"; evil-famed Uskok pirates; guttural-tongued officers of the Austrian "Maria Teresa"; Mongol featured Magyar Hussars; Bonaparte's "unconquerables"; blue-eyed, rosy-faced soldier and sailor boys of Britain,—and who can tell how many other strange, eager, belligerent souls! It was a goodly, gallant, if not particularly virtuous or lamb-like company, that waited unseen to catch the first glimpse of the terrible new weapon invented by this strange Northman, which sent Death speeding through the sea, unsuspected by the enemy, while the senders of it looked silently on, just like a company of old women over a simmering kettle, awaiting its boiling. It was also a company in harmony with the broken, convulsed history of this royal and free port, which has passed through the centuries, from race to race, from conqueror to conqueror, from civilization to civilization, each and all of which engraved enduring memories on its Istrian stones—the history of Europe in cobbles.

Leave the wide streets, the Via del Corso, the Piazza-Dante, in the centre of the new quarter, and follow the Via Lido and the Via del Porto to the eastwards; pass by the theatre and take to the Piazza Scarpo, then keep along the Via San Bernardino and enter the original Fiume, the Tarsatica of the Illyrians, Romans, and Greeks, the Rjeka of the Slavs, the St. Veit am Flaum of the Holy Roman Empire. It has seen better days, and met with an extraordinary number of vicissitudes, sieges, raids, sackings, plagues, earthquakes, and bombardments, yet

still old Tarsatica remains firmly rooted upon its ridge on the Karst Hills, and along the banks of its little river—the Rjeka, or Fiumara, the mouth of which affords anchorage to ships not requiring much depth of water, ships whose cargoes for the most part consist of colossal, wine-filled casks, timber, tobacco, fruit, bones and fish. Like the careful beauties, who dwell across the social frontier in modern Fiume, Old Rjeka believes in dozing. Apparently it has been dozing for ages, with one eye half open, in case of accidents. The very atmosphere of its narrow thoroughfares is medieval in more ways than one ; dark, mysterious, and very odoriferous are its covered alleys, where the fussy feet of hygienic reformers have left no footprints. Labyrinths of gloomy, vaulted passages, lighted only by holes at the top, through which long rays of sunshine rush to fall in big patches of whiteness on the time-worn pavement beneath, lead from crooked street to streets still more crooked. Houses—forgotten palaces, throw out hints of secrets long preserved behind their sun-cracked façades, rusty balconies, and worm-eaten wooden jalousies—reminiscences, these latter, of long departed Oriental influence. On one especially curious old entrance gate, deeply set in a series of arches within arches, stand two ugly cinque cento lions, which seem to writhe uncomfortably. The great charm of a stroll through Old Fiume, of losing one's self in its tortuous by-ways, is that it is impossible to foretell what surprise may be in store. Now it is some bazaar scene of market, again it is some stone monument of past days, a fountain, a coat-of-arms on a dilapidated entrance door, its lovely colours—azure, vert, gold, but slightly dimmed. At every turn there is a little wine shop, caverns these, smelling pungently of vinegar sodden kegs, damp straw, and defective drainage. In front of their inferno-like mouths are vine-trellised shelters, where in Homeric indolence, groups of tanned, ear-ringed sailors and workmen, are imbibing sour Istrian, or sweetish Dalmatian wine, throwing dice, shifting dominoes, and courting Morpheus. Over every weather and time ravaged wall, nature has thrown an exquisite veiling, green swaying creepers, vines, roses—dusky crimson, pink and white, which cling and tangle lovingly about the neglected masonry. Acacia trees sweep their showery, perfumed sprays over each dirty rubbish heap. Red and scarlet geraniums laugh from out the crannies of the grey or yellow walls, and the whole scene is flooded with stinging sunlight, except where the indigo shadows fall darkly abrupt. Yes, here is colour, flaring, almost cruel. Multi-tinted rags droop from windows, balconies, from strings, passing from house to house. It is intolerably sultry. "*Santissima Virgine Maria*, what hellish heat!" gasps a redundant

fish-wife, of Italian pedigree, as she rolls by with the peculiar, untrammelled gait common to women accustomed since childhood to carrying on their heads enormous loads.

Most shops in the old quarter are, like the drinking dens, open in front, showing quaint interiors. Here is a corn-dealer's, with its big sacks of yellow *polenta* flour, beside an old clothes, Jewish, establishment, which displays ill-smelling garments of every hue and fashion ; next door to this is an image maker's, full of simpering blue and white Virgins, pink-cheeked Bambinos, lugubrious saints, crucifixes, and altar embroideries. Close by is a barber's shop, and at the entrance stands the owner sharpening his razors, while a long-suffering row of soapy chinned clients awaits his ministrations. Possibly he tarrieth, and the bearded ones yearn, because the owner of the adjoining *fabbrica di paste*, a damsel of exceptional comeliness, tall, amply bosomed, with saucy brown eyes, heavy coils of glossy hair and pearly teeth, seldom concealed behind her red, sensuous lips, is ogling the barber from behind her long strings of macaroni. A big, square-figured young woman, with maternal grey eyes, bronzed and freckled skin, and wide tranquil mouth, is eyeing the comely damsel and barber with cool indifference from her seat outside the door of the *fiorista*, the artificial flower shop over the way. She achieved her object—a difficult matter if one is dowerless—when a year ago, she sent the rich and obnoxious Austrian sausage merchant—*pizzic agnolo*—about his German business, and married the good looking paper rose manufacturer of this street. When not considering the neighbours, her fingers ply swiftly to and fro above her lace cushion, where a lovely design, woven from memory, is growing into a flounce. The wooden bobbins rattle merrily as the white threads twist and cross over the smooth, blue and white surface of the pillow, and every now and then a happy little song ripples from her lips, while her bare foot works a wicker cradle to the cooing, gurgling edification of the bandaged infant within. Near the end of the street is a cheap jeweller's shop, with its sparkling silver filagree brooches, pink coral necklaces, and blue bead chains. Under the same roof is a bronze worker's, where rows of burnished pots and pans and plates reflect back every sun ray, and beyond that again is a flower and fruit stall, with its potato piles, onion and garlic strings, mushrooms, sweet herbs, its hillocks of red tomatoes, its musk melons, with shining rinds, water melons, sweet limes, figs, citrons, cherries, wild strawberries, marrows, and immense pumpkins, cut down their middles to advertise the vivid, wholesome, orange freshness of their insides ; with its great cane baskets and brown earthen jars, overflowing with roses, carnations, Madonna lilies, orange

flowers, and goodness knows what else. The perfume of these blossoms struggles with the odour of the fish shop at the corner, and strives, ineffectively, to counteract the horrible effluvia emanating from a third-rate butcher's, where so-called beef, goat joints, muscular cocks, who have seen many years, chickens which remain "spring" for perhaps the best part of a year, and weird and unexpected anatomies of every sort and kind are for sale, furnishing, meanwhile, a rendezvous for myriads of bluebottles, and other members of the fly tribe. With one eye open, ready to pounce on any succulent morsels which may happen to drop within their own or their neighbour's reach, with teeth on guard to snap at unwary mosquitoes, dogs, of mixed breed—as is proper in dogs of Istria—snooze in a semicircle round this disagreeable spot. On such a hot day, not only mosquitoes, but human beings will act wisely in keeping beyond striking distance of their teeth. A few paces up a covered alley hangs a universal provider's signpost, proclaiming the presence of everything edible; a veritable Selfridge's in miniature is this enterprising establishment. Here, in closest proximity, is white Hungarian flour, highly smelling cheeses, dried fish, kegs of tunny in vinegar, sardines, cooked hams, weird pies, bowls of ready-made potato and onion salad, olives and oil, sausages, honey, chocolate; a battalion of bottles, labelled "*sirop*," a small tray of fiery liqueurs, coffee, beans, lentils, maize meal, a box of mouldy biscuits, once upon a time baked in Edinburgh, candles, paraffin, and some half-dozen Istrian wine bottles—immense bloated goat-skins, stained a dark blood colour, having a piece of bamboo reed, stopped with a spigot, sticking out of one corner, ocular evidence that wine is also procurable. Here, too, flies crawl and buzz.

Later on, when the day is older, many women will come before the doors of these ramshackle houses, and sit spinning and chattering together about nothing in particular. Just now, however, they are cooking the dinners, washing lettuce, rolling paste, wringing fowls' necks, frying onions and garlic, stirring *minestra*, and making a great to-do about all they undertake. It is certainly remarkable what clattering of pots and dishes accompanies the preparation of a southern dinner, especially an Italian dinner, and in the streets of Old Rjeka, most folks belong to the Latin race, the Slovenes preferring, as a rule, to set up their habitations at some distance from the city.

But it is only in these obscure and back streets and lanes that the Latin race holds undisputed sway. Race meets race, tribe jostles tribe along the quays and canals of both New and Old Fiume. Many peoples meet on the emigration wharfs, where

yearly thousands upon thousands of poor peasants, some sad and disheartened, others wildly optimistic—Croats, Dalmatians, Slovens, Czechs, Poles, Italians, Bosnians, Serbo-Croats, wait like helpless sheep to embark on the big steamers which are to transport them far away to the new world, to freedom and fortune, to the enjoyments and responsibilities of life, which they have never experienced under the reactionary Hapsburg rule. In order to realize what Austria-Hungary loses and the United States and Canada gain—for the blood of these down-trodden ones, whom the Teutons and Magyars regard as "the Lazaroni of the Monarchy," is vital, strong and healthy—it would be well to visit the huge hotel, or hostel, especially built to shelter over three thousand emigrants at a time. This hotel stands opposite the Rice Mill on the Pl. Andrassy. In it may be seen faces and characteristics, which date their origin back to very ancient times: beauty, still purely Greek, possessed by the inhabitants of Issa (Lissa), Pharia (Lesina), Corcyra (Curzola): features—high, beaky noses, lantern jaws, eagle eyes, such as were once common in the streets of Imperial Rome: complexions which were painted long centuries ago under the sun of Africa, India, Spain and Palestine.

Roughly calculated, the population of Fiume amounts to about forty thousand; eighteen thousand Italians, three thousand Magyars, two thousand Germans, and the remainder Slavs. On the quays, by the Porto Canale Fiumara, an extraordinarily heterogeneous crowd is gathered. Glance around. It requires but little imagination to picture these Fiume harbours as they must have appeared in bygone times when the heavy galleons (*carracks*) of Venice, fortress-like in proportion, impelled by immense red sails and by oars plied by miserable galley slaves—twenty-six oars to a side and six slaves to every oar, each slave chained to his rowing bench, and labouring under the eye of taskmasters armed with cruel whips. Galleons,* having guns on their three decks, their prows terminating in a long, sharp beak, painted black like the rest of the hull, with banners of crimson, gold and azure. It is easy to behold in fancy these quays as they looked when such a vessel dropped anchor in Rjeka's watershed, and formed a rallying point for swarms of smaller galleys—*galères subtiles*—the *fergatas*, or frigates, of the period. It is easy to picture Rjeka's long bays and canals, as they too often were, lying paralyzed under "the shadow of the horsetails," under the curse of the terrible corsairs, when the fleet of the devilish Barbarossa and his janissaries swept in to plunder,

* The name for these galleons was *agrab*, or raven.

murder, torture, burn; when the wretched townsfolk were taken—Slavs and Latins alike—and thrown by heaps, like logs, into the narrow, pestilential holds of the Turkish warships, to be only released at periods for examination, "when those who appeared so nearly worn out with hunger, floggings, torturings, and privations as to render their recovery doubtful were cast alive into the sea as infidel carcasses." Even to-day, mingling with the ordinary thousand and one noises of a twentieth century port, one may hear the echo of the piteous wailing which was wont to go up from these waterways, when, with great bows turned seawards, with sails unfurled, the Ottoman pirates scuttled off with their living booty and rich loot, leaving nothing in their wake only a long white trail of spray, and desolation unspeakable.

Only memories, however, disturb the peace of the Porto Canale as we see it now. No danger threatens the innumerable fishing smacks and cargo boats which lie rocking sleepily, painted bow to painted bow, beneath a forest of lofty masts on which nets are high hauled ready for mending. Whether folded close together, as so many of these fishing boats' sails are folded, like the wings of gigantic butterflies when settling on honey flowers, or whether spread full to the sunlight with their fantastic designs —haloed Virgins, saints, bleeding hearts pierced by arrows, geometrical roses, stars—gleaming gaily, no matter how viewed, these sails of the Adriatic are an object of beauty, in keeping with the wonderful picturesqueness of everything else hereabouts. To-morrow an emigrant ship is timed to leave for New York, and many of the emigrants have already arrived, and are wandering aimlessly about, taking a farewell stroll on the shores of the old world. Staring stolidly at a cargo of wine casks being unloaded, is a group of Istrian country folk from the adjoining suburbs. The men are dressed in black floppy cloth coats below which a white, kilted linen petticoat frills out—sufficiently short to show thick, worsted stockings—cumbersome, untanned, cowhide foot-gear turned up at the toes, like Turkish bath slippers, and red caps over their left ears. They counteract the stolidness of their expression by the rakishness of their costumes. Near these are some genuine Slovenes. Tall, melancholy, bronze-faced persons are these, with light grey, or blue eyes, obliquely set, high, bony foreheads, aquiline noses, and long, fair or brown hair. They still adhere to the dress of their forefathers, described by Procopius, which consists of a needlewrought shirt of white homespun linen, open at the front showing a brown chest; wide trousers (*benevrechi*) of blue cloth, fitting close to the calf and ankle, and bound round the extremities with strips of unbleached linen or wool; pliable shoes (*opanci*) of undressed ox leather,

bound at the top by dried sheep or kid-skin thongs ; a scarlet and black braided cap with hanging fringe on one side, or, if if the owner hails from the Bosnia frontier, encircled by a band of many coloured silks and wools. Above the white shirt is a little waistcoat (*krozet*), resplendent with scores of silver buttons, surmounting which is a big, uncut sheepskin, and last, but most important, an eight-inch broad, brown or red leather belt, which supports and protects the abdomen. This serves as a receptacle for various necessities such as long-barrelled pistols, a murderous knife, a short scimitar, a skin flask of brandy, a pouch of tobacco, and a card, dice, and money bag. Never does a self-respecting Slovenic peasant come up to town without a pair of gold or silver earrings, and a white or scarlet umbrella !

The feminine complement of all this muscle and glory is decked out in a loose white linen chemise, or bodice, embroidered at every seam, closed at the throat, with floating sleeves, a skirt of white or blue linen, or frieze, reaching half-way between the knee and the ankle, an apron (*prejaca*, or *travesa*) of some brilliant colour, shoes similar to those worn by the men, and gaudy worsted hosiery. A soft, white linen kerchief, folded demurely round the face and head, or a tiny, coquettish, red felt cap glittering with silver coins and spangles ; for jewellery, rows upon rows of coins, and strangely lovely necklaces of bone beads. These blue beads are deserving of a chapter to themselves, so ancient and curious is their story. To see them is to find one's mind leaping back to pre-historic times : back before the coming of Venetian or Turkish sea-rovers : back to the dim days when their wearer's Slavonic ancestors were clad in but little else. Many classical historians have referred to these cornflower-blue ornaments when describing the Veneds, or Windis. Almost always are they found among the human ashes in the red and black, earthen Vened cinerary vases frequently discovered in Russia, Poland, Bohemia, Moravia, Carniola, Istria, in Croatia-Slavonia, the Balkans, along the valleys of the Danube and Elbe, on the shores of the Baltic, the Black Sea, the Levant, and the Adriatic—wherever, in fact, the far-spread Slav race has set foot.

Drifting up the street, come a couple of Dalmatian girls, in cobalt-hued bodices and skirts, which are cut about seven inches shorter in front than behind, thus allowing an ugly view of monstrous gaiters and sandals of fibre and raw hide. In shrill conversation with them are a man and his wife from Spalato. Both of them flaunt the characteristic red cap, and the husband bears a comical likeness to the typical operatic villain, in his voluminous fawn cloth cloak, one corner of which is thrown over the shoulder in theatrical fashion under which glimpses can be got of a white

undergarment folded to the waist by a gorgeous silken sash. The wife evidently believes in durable clothing. Her naturally well-developed legs are swathed and reswathed with yards of—what looks like—tapestry as closely woven as a Persian rug, which bulge out above her flat, boat-shaped footwear. This taste for the substantial is also shown in the material and style of her gay, horizontally striped skirt and apron, and padded blue and green waistcoat. Yet, however unattractive the dress may be, it does not detract from the beauty of the owner's small, well-poised head with its silky coils and plaits of blue-black hair—a beauty which is the inheritance of the Dalmatian women. And if this fair one excels in the size of her feet, or rather, shoes, so does her sister of Lussin Grande excel in the size of her head-dress, which is an outlandish turban erection, of towering height, having one silk betasselled end which hangs down the back. Lussin Grande is noted also for the expansive persons of its women. It would be difficult to discover the beginning and the end of a Lussin Grande female's waistline, so numberless and wide are her petticoat pleats. Then there are maidens of Pola, also wearing full bright skirts, their shoulders and breasts gracefully draped with snowy muslin kerchiefs held in place by big silver filigree brooches set in rosettes of pink, green, or blue ribbon, their dark locks smoothed, Madonna fashion, under another kerchief of delicately embroidered cambric. Presently a Montenegrin hillman strides by, magnificent in his physique and national dress of full black breeches, chest plastron of scarlet cloth stiff with silver and gold embroidery, short, tightly fitting jacket of white flannel, black stockings, well drawn up and fitting neatly to his ankles, a red and spangled cap, a silver studded belt chock full of pistols and *kandjars*—a handsome fellow truly! And amid all this blinding colour and whiteness, the women of Veglia in their traditional dress of cloudy black muslin—mourning donned by their ancestresses, long ago, for one of the Frangipani Counts, and never set aside through succeeding generations—flit to and fro like soft-winged, blackbirds through a meadow of wild flowers. Mingling with the crowd are Venetian, Triestian, English and German sailors, Venetian women in pale mauve, rose madder, or creamy, fringed shawls, Hungarian soldiers, dark, heavily featured, betraying their Oriental origin in the set formality, bordering on phlegm, of their bearing, though inwardly they are fiery enough. And here come three Austrian officers, so coldly calm, that they, too, seem to possess a placidity which is Turkish. "*Jo! worum nit gor?*" ("Yes! why not?") they would probably exclaim, seeing their racial protector, the adaptable Kaiser Wilhelm, has been busily engaged, since

the late Balkan war, in cultivating everything Oriental, from religion down even to the fez! But, truth to tell, these Austrians are individually and privately rather agreeable persons, gifted with remarkable skill in the art of pleasant living, claiming as their own the quality which Menzel describes as "*Epicuraismus ohne leidenschaft*"—"epicurism without passionateness." Yet—and here their Teutonic limitations are revealed—they utterly fail to grasp the fact that other peoples may also wish to study the art of pleasant living! In Austrian and Magyar eyes, the Slavs are little better than dogs, and, indeed, "a dog of a Slav" is a favourite expression. If the dogs grumble, let them grumble, say these amiable Epicureans, "*Losst's gehen wie's geht!*"—"Let things go as they are going!" So things *do* go as they are going! Double despotism, unlimited over body and soul, a conspiracy of clerics to keep down the soul, a conspiracy of bureaucrats to keep down the body, a jealous censorship of the press, an Argus-eyed police force, an exclusive and degenerate aristocracy. The only thing which occasionally sends a shiver down the Epicurean's spine is the chill wind of the on-coming blast of the Russian Motherland's fury. Things continue unchanged, and the "holiday children" sing songs and dance waltzes.

A straw not infrequently shows how the wind blows. With one of these officers is his wife. She stops to bargain with a Croat egg woman. But she considers it beneath her dignity to converse in the language of "the dogs"—probably she does not understand a word of it—and carries on negotiations in German, with the result that both sides lose their tempers, and finally, the Croat hisses through beautiful white teeth, "*Legt d'ader selber, wenns engs' z'theuer sind!*" ("Lay the eggs yourself, if mine are too dear for you!")

This incident explains perfectly the whole Austrian-Hungarian situation. Austrians object to, or cannot, lay their own eggs, and the brotherhood of beggars are no longer willing to lay the eggs for them!

A chuckle of glee sounds from a neighbouring knot of Serbs, who intensely relish the situation. No eggs for the Germans! The market dame becomes conscious of support. Very handsome, and very handsomely attired are her Serbian racial kinsmen in their silver-stiff zouaves, scarlet caps, and sheepskins, which they wear inside out, the polished white skin rendered all the whiter by its edging of crimson velvet and silver braid. An altercation over the price of eggs between a Teuton and a Slav! But under the ring of this scornful Serbian laughter, in the flash of the egg vendor's eyes we have the spirit that inspired Kollar's

racial trumpet call—"Scattered Slavs, let us be a united whole, and no longer mere fragments! Let us be all or nought! Let us become a mighty statue, of which Russia will form the head, the Lechs the body, the Czechs the arms and hands, the Serbs the feet, the smaller Slavic races its armour and weapons. Then shall all Europe bend before this idol, and the Slav language, which the false ideas of the Germans hold for a mere speech of slaves, shall resound in palaces and even in the mouths of our rivals."

In spite of the heat, there is plenty of activity on the quays. A Venetian *tarbarcola* is unloading its freight of onions and garlic, a Dalmatian cutter, barrel after barrel of wine; a Greek schooner, chest upon chest of raisins; a Scandinavian ship, its cargo of train oil. Weather-beaten Chioggian fishermen, black haired and swarthy, are cursing one another about something which is nothing. Officials with fierce moustaches and much pomposity are wrangling with shipmasters. Their presence calls to mind bygone days when Istrian trade, under Venetian rule, was subjected to the strictest discipline, when Venetian, not Hungarian, officials poked their intrusive noses into everything, saw that the vintage was properly controlled, sampled the wine before sellers were permitted to sell or purchasers allowed to purchase, cut off the tails of all fish left unsold in the market by sundown, limited the number of loaves to be baked in each public oven, gave warning of theft, put prices on foreign imports, and forced merchants, previous to selling, to display their goods for three days on the wharfs or on their piazzas, forbade armed men the entry into towns, and so on. Perhaps it would be as well for the community to-day if some of these ancient laws still existed, especially the one labelling stale fish, for even the most artistically or historically inclined must experience difficulty in ignoring the all-pervading smell of decomposition.

It is getting on towards midday, and the booths, stalls and merchandise are being taken down and stacked up again on the rude, ten to fifteen feet long waggons, some of which are drawn by the owners of the merchandise—about twelve or fourteen men and women to a waggon—and some by oxen. The oxen of Istria are huge classic-looking beasts, biscuit coloured or snowy white, with wide-branching horns, capable of displaying to advantage any number of pagan rose garlands.

From time to time the more impatient of them lift up their voices and bellow discontent, whilst others more wisely chew the cud undisturbed and placid. Very becoming are their head-dresses and veils of rose-tinted, knotted twine through which their long-lashed velvet brown eyes gleam drowsily.

Up the centre of the thoroughfare, dividing the footpath

from the road, runs an old, very old paling, curiously wrought with figures and heads representing Turks, Magyars, Bosnians, Italians and Austrians, all of them hideous caricatures of Istria's conquerors and peoples. And, not far away, on the hill side, stands the Roman triumphal arch, erected in honour of the Emperor Claudius Gothicus (268-270 A.D.), now little better than a ruin, half embedded in the wall of a tottering building of the Renaissance period.

A blind guitarist and little sheepskin-coated, white chemised Slovene girl with a triangle, come sauntering up the shady side of the street. A religious procession of fisherfolk, led by two priests in rich vestments, is wending its way towards the Church of SS. Vito and Modesto. The sunshine flashes on the swaying banners, towering gilt crucifix and chandelier, with its three candles, the incense smoke curls up from the acolytes' swinging censers, the chanting is loud and monotonous. Sudden confusion! A yell—a scuffle! The girl with the triangle darts, like an eel, under the very noses of the priests, followed by a snorting purple-visaged policeman who, after several painful attempts at last succeeds in running his prey to earth beneath a picturesque row of lemonade booths displaying each a painted Madonna or saint who patronizes lemonade. The policeman has a heavy hand, if an apoplectic visage, and the girl screams. Beaten, but not corrected, she delivers up from under her sheepskin, a flamboyant silk handkerchief, and, on threats of ulterior punishment, a third and a fourth from the same place between her chemise and her ribs. An indignant third party—a Triestan, in the full glory of the "*mandriere*" (long waistcoat with silver buttons), black hose, short black jacket, and mushroom shaped hat, emerges from behind a stall, where he has been awaiting results, to reclaim his own, while two other officers of the law, hard by, who have been on the same service as their colleague, are seen bringing back other spoils of the Indias in abundance. For every stolen article there is a whack on the little Slovene's mop of curls. Such a little Slav girl! Such a bulky Magyar! But "the dogs" have hard heads, too hard for permanent injury, and the good Italian folk behind their lemonade stalls, laugh contemptuously as they turn their revolving barrels of iced water, and to the angry disgust of the arm of the law, throw out business-like hints as to the virtue of a cooling drink as an antidote for a ruffled temper.

Noon chimes from the Cathedral and a score of belfries reply. The serious labours of the day are ended. Oxen struggle to their legs and prepare to tug their loads countrywards. The quays and thoroughfares gradually become deserted. The restaurants fill up, and an atmosphere of dinner settles down over everything.

Now that the town has ceased to buzz, whilst its citizens are enjoying their excellent Istrian soups, "*polenta*" porridge, salads, cheese, olives, wine, coffee and cigarettes, turn and climb the hill leading up to the Pilgrimage Church of the Madonna del Tarsatto and the eyrie of the Frangipani.

Beautiful and wonderful is this road which winds like a ribbon up the side of the gorge of the Ricina through which the river froths fresh from its source in the Karst Mountains. Patient hands have carved every yard of its seventy-mile length. It is well named "The Gateway of Hungary." Those who hewed it with such labour out of the solid rock have left behind them a monument of their genius as road builders, if not as politicians or prophets! In 1839, when Austria Hungary hoped for an alliance with Britain and France, it was intended that this highway should prove the road along which a French or English army, after landing at Fiume, would march to swift victory over the Slavonic peoples on the Save, and eventually, on the Danube, opposite Belgrade!

Up—up twists the path, here and there zigzagging beneath and around almost perpendicular rocks, here and there branching off into by-ways leading to far-off hill villages. The *lapis lazuli* sea, studded with pearly islands, lies simmering, heaving, slumbering, hundreds of feet below. And, like so many wind drifted, scarlet pimpernels, the tiny fishing boats rock aimlessly up and down awaiting the expected afternoon breeze. The sun heat is dropping down on the world with a glitter that hurts. The town with its red-tiled roofs and white-walled buildings is stilled. Behind the rose-entwined walls of the gardens, bees are humming, grasshoppers are chirping, and the fields are starred with flowers. White villas cuddle close to the hillside, scarcely visible among billows of a thousand hued blossoms—their whiteness strongly contrasting with the flaming geranium creepers. Luxuriant vines interlace the trees and fall in wreaths from the tips of the branches. The pomegranates are covered with rosy buds, the glossy fig leaves shine like silk. Among the scent of orange and lime groves the senses almost reel.

Like a white eagle on a mountain crag, the old fortress home of Fiume's ancient chieftains gazes down on the passing ships, and passing years. There is nothing here to-day which suggests jealous hatred and ruthless warfare, unruly passions and ambitions, intrigues and murderings. The castle tells nothing of its grim history. Not until one has penetrated into its vaults and read the names on the tombs, not until one stands, half mesmerized before the picture of the most famous of the Frangipani family, is it possible to realize that here, one after another of this lawless house was born and lived and loved, and hated, and murdered,

and prayed, and fought, and plotted and—died ; here where now the honeysuckle and glycineas and pearl-white lilies bloom, where the blackbirds and nightingales sing, and the green lizards dart from crevice to crevice. Looking into the dark pictured eyes of the greatest of the Frangipani, who once, long centuries ago, ruled these lands, "The Count of Tragedy," as he was called, his spirit suddenly appears to come back and to hover strong, ferocious, grave, resolute, true, even beautiful, through the mists of ages. And in the brooding, painted eyes there seems to be an expression of self-justification, which is almost defiant. Whatever were his faults, however he acted, he was a great man this "Count of Tragedy."

Not more than a stone's throw from the Castle stands the Church of the Pilgrims, the shrine of Fiume's favourite Madonna, the resting-place of the Adriatic fishermen's Mother of the Sea. St. Luke, so the legend declares, painted this picture one evening as he sat talking with the Virgin and St. Joseph by the well-side of Nazareth. The obscure doctor of Galilee was certainly a prolific, if not a particularly talented artist, judging by the many Holy Families attributed to his brush. He knew next to nothing of colouring, and nothing at all about perspective, but a soft radiance seems to shine from all the gentle Madonnas and baby Christs attributed to him. It is the only thing of value to be found in the Church of the Pilgrims, with the exception of a few ancient frescoes, and some mouldy Turkish spoils. A grotesque and numerous collection of votive offerings, presented by sailors and fisherfolk who once called on their Mother and Child in distress and beheld the beacon light of their faith shining above the tempest and danger, hang on the walls. Queer little wooden toy ships, fishing nets, anchors, oars, each with its separate story of the sea and of some poor sailor man who put trust in Him who also, once upon a time, had His business in great waters. On this tranquil summer day the only sounds to be heard in the building are the twittering of the birds in the roof, the hum of millions of insects in the shrubs outside, and the interminable mutterings of a young Croatian fisherman who is rubbing his tow-coloured shock of long hair backwards and forwards against the altar steps, and making a long arm, now and again, to bring his rosary into contact with the hem of the altar cloth. So full of hopeless sorrow is his thin, fatalistic Slavic countenance, so choked with passionate sobs the soft, sibilant words in which he prays, that it is a relief to leave him there, and wander out again into the cheerful sunshine, remembering, however, that the Slav heart, like the child's heart, being by nature credulous, trusting, and inclined to accept the inevitable, is very open to consolation.

The famous Bridge of Mostar.

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Through the silver grey foliage of the olive trees and crisping chestnut branches the sea sparkles joyously. Away down there is Abbazzia, and a dozen other small towns. Beyond the gorge of the Ricina tower the purple Croatian Mountains, and the stately black cypress trees loom like sentinels upon the frontier. A stony path serpentines on and still on, and along this path, some miles inland from the castle, is a small inn.

It is an ordinary *gostina*,* standing in a cleared space, or courtyard, where a motley assortment of waggons, carts, and vehicles, all with their shafts aspiring to heaven, give evidence that many of the market folk have broken the journey here in order to partake of the midday meal. The stable is full of rough-coated, meagre, little horses, and both stables and horses are infested with flies. Two or three white-clad, bare-footed farm hands are bringing up fodder, while others sit and smoke on an adjoining manure heap. There is no limit to the number of "hands" round a Slovene's inn. Roseate veiled oxen are reposing on the ground, and are with difficulty chewing green food under the meshes of their head protectors, pigeons are whirling and cooing above the chimneys, fowls—presently to be eaten—carry on active exploration upon a pile of vegetable refuse. In the centre of the courtyard is a pump with a big wooden wheel, covered by a moss-grown shed, and one or two scantily-attired girls are chattering and giggling under its shade, beside a mother who is nursing her baby. From the entrance door of the inn a flock of small white ducks and portly white geese are waddling off towards a tiny mountain rill. The barn, standing at right angles to the main building, is filled with diners, chiefly Slovenes. Through the murk of the inn kitchen can be seen the usual furnishings and habitants of a Slavic homestead—a large combined cooking and dwelling room overflowing with a thriving, patriarchal family. The furniture consists of a table, some high-backed, carved and rudely painted chairs, long forms, and a giant cupboard of unstained wood. On the whitewashed walls are brightly-coloured pictures of religious subjects. Over the entrance door hangs a bunch of dried rosemary and olive leaves, side by side with a blown goose egg having some long draggled feathers stuck in a hole made at one end of it—the dried branches signifying that the farm is a public hostel, the egg and its appendages typifying a dove, emblem of the Holy Ghost. To the left of the common living room is one almost as large, where the family—and this includes sons, daughters, sons' wives, daughters' husbands, children, and grandchildren, cousins, aunts, and dependants—

* The Slavonic for inn.

sleep in winter, to be near the stove which is placed in the wall separating the two rooms, though during the hot summer nights most members of the younger generations prefer to dwell in the open, or in the cowhouses, barns, or stables. The stove, made of baked clay, ornamented with tiles of green and blue glazed earthenware, sends out a furious heat, and why it should be lighted at all in such warm weather is a mystery, seeing that most of the food is cooked over a great fire in the yard at the rear of the farm premises. Over this fire two stalwart boys, their faces scarcely out of reach of flame and smoke, are superintending the roasting, on a long wooden spit, of a kid, half a sheep, a small pig, flanked by a couple of fowls. The operations are closely watched by some half dozen retainers who crouch about the yard full of interested and hungry curiosity. Now and then one of the onlookers springs forward to relieve the boys, who, it would seem, are in no little danger of being cooked along with their charge. At an improvised table—a great split tree trunk laid on some upturned wine casks—a girl is mixing a stupendous bowl of *polenta*, the yellow maize flour falling in cascades from her left hand into the water in the bowl, while with her right she stirs the porridge swiftly round and round, till the whole is of proper consistency, when she turns it out on the plank and cuts it into slices with a string, to be eaten later along with the *castradina*, or smoked mutton. This *polenta* maker might have stood for a Greek Hebe, so graceful and strong is her figure, so delicate her hands and feet, so lovely the curves of her small, swelling breasts, the slope of her shoulders, the shape of her little, perfectly poised head, the classic features of her oval face. Her charms are emphasized by her dress, or rather, lack of dress, for she is barefooted, and bare-legged, and wears only a single, long, white linen tunic, embroidered with blue and red at the neck and sleeves, and fastened by a wide silver studded leather belt, while a yellow rose tucked into the braids of her russet, brown hair, is her sole coquetry. Beside the stove a forbiddingly ugly old hag, the great grandmother of the *polenta* maker, is spinning, as are all the girls under the shed. For Slav women spin interminably, whenever their hands are free to do so, whether in the meadows herding cattle, or trudging along the highways, their heads heavily laden with produce for the market; always they spin, with distaff fixed in the end of their girdles, their fingers placidly turning the wool, flax, or hemp thread to which their spindles are hung. This ancient dame has resigned her place as *domatchika*—chief housekeeper or mistress—in favour of her daughter, a stout, comely woman who comes forward to greet both paying and non-paying guests with the usual Slavonic offer of wine and

welcome, an offer which her husband, the *starechina* or *gospodar*—the first meaning "the ancient," the second "the lord"—confirms, by calling for *slivovitza*—brandy—distilled from his own plum trees. He places everything he possesses at the stranger's disposal "in the name of the white Christ." But he is no ordinary Slovene, this tall, powerfully built fellow, with his strongly marked, weather-beaten face, his long dishevelled locks, which enhance, rather than mar, his bold, clearly defined features. His complexion is too dark, his hair too black, his movements too brisk for a pure-bred Southern Slav. There is an indefinable something in his whole appearance, in the swift glance of his black eyes, in the scornful carriage of his head, in the swagger by which he calls attention to his spotless breeches, gorgeous, silver-encrusted, scarlet jacket, and shining belt, bristling with weapons, that bespeaks an ancestry ruthless and undisciplined. Half Slav though he be, through the other half of his being courses the hotter, redder blood of those Uskok pirates who, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were the terrible robbers described in an old southern Slavonic folk song as "Demons, feared from Bagdad to the end of Egypt." There are not very many descendants of the Uskoks hereabouts nowadays, though they are considerably more numerous beyond the Karst ranges, especially in and around Karlovac in Croatia, where they can easily be distinguished from the purer Slavs by their peculiar customs. One of these is to hire mourners at funerals, who relate the life and good deeds of the deceased, and challenge death with wild yelling and handclapping, while the head of the corpse is wrapped in a cloth pierced with eyelet holes "that the devil may not attack unseen."

What a weird conglomeration this innkeeper presents!

"*E un Atila!*" mutter the Italians, on meeting him in the market, and, though it is certainly only his expression that is bellicose, they are scarcely to be blamed for imagining that any one who has a drop of Uskok blood in his veins must necessarily be a ruffian. Various local Slavonic tales mention the bloodthirsty adventures of these old-time marauders, and relate how, from being merely a handful of starving Bosnian "refugees" and escaped galley slaves, fleeing from Turkish oppression, they gradually grew in power, enlisted in their company hundreds of malcontents and outlaws—Greeks, Italians, Czechs, Magyars, Poles, Gipsies, and even Englishmen, and at last got a stronghold from the Frangipani on the stony little island of Segna or Zuegg, in the Canale della Morlacca—Canal of evil weather. These tales go on to relate how they scoured the Adriatic, stealing, pillaging, sacking princes' palaces, carrying off beautiful sultanas,

and, horror of horrors, "dancing on the silver tables of most holy Cardinals," and how, frequently they were captured, and in their turn, were tortured and exposed to public gaze in iron cages, like wild beasts, in the Place San Marco, in Venice. Every Slav boy has heard how the Uskok chieftain, Prébech, cheated the Turkish Pasha of Siget by pretending that he—Prébech—was also a Turk, and thereby obtained entrance into the Pasha's Hungarian Palace and goodwill. And youthful eyes glisten when the story is told and retold, how the very excellent and fearless Prébech made much gunpowder when he was in the Turk's palace with which to blow up the Croats—so Prébech assured the Pasha—but, in reality, to destroy the whole of the Ottoman fortifications, which, by the way, he did. There are few, as it has been said, of the descendants of the Uskoks near the coast, for the reason that, when Europe decided to suppress them, as a public danger, and, by the treaty of Madrid (1617), combined to annihilate their fleet, and place a German garrison on Segna, the remnant of robbers which survived were exiled from the littoral and driven back into Croatia, where a strong garrison kept them in check until time and intermarriage with the surrounding population tamed their unruly tendencies.

Such, then, is the history of the forefathers of this *gospodar* who stands so hospitably ready to dispense *slivovitza* amongst his guests!

The peasants in the barn have finished their dinner, and clouds of tobacco smoke, and strains of melancholy, yowling, yet fascinating Slovene music float upon the hot air.

They are chanting a characteristic Southern Slavonic folk song. A bass voice has commenced a kind of recitative, in praise of some ancient and marvellously heroic deed of daring—and the first deep voice is presently joined by a tenor, and a duet follows: then a clear, bird-like soprano rings out, and the duet becomes a trio, and continues, until, quite unexpectedly, the whole community break in and taking up the refrain, to the accompaniment of a *svirala*—an outlandish species of bagpipe—bring the song to an abrupt, passionate termination in an angry, revengeful, shrill, staccato note. Through the barn door the singers can be seen, their faces grave, sitting in two rows gazing stolidly at one another across a table, covered with wine bottles and the remains of the feast.

By-and-by the farm hands, and a score or so of outsiders crowd up to listen and take part in the proceedings. Finally slinking across the courtyard, coming apparently from nowhere, appear the inevitable gipsies. Attracted by the music, jealous—because they consider the right to manufacture music is theirs

exclusively—greedy for profit, no matter whether honestly or dishonestly obtained, they have left their pack animals and carts under the chestnut trees across the road. Their beasts are dropping with fatigue, steaming and trembling under merciless loads of tent coverings, tent poles, pots, old and sick people, and babies—but the Tsiganes heed not suffering either of beasts or weaklings. Here at the *gostina* they will make melodies sweeter than Christian music, and here is an audience to be captured.

"The Tsiganes!" "The Tsiganes!"

Moving like cats, naked to their waists, clad only in vermin-infested, filthy, ragged, drab breeches, secured to their persons by raw hide cartridge belts, each man armed with an old rifle, a long, curved knife and a pistol; their bright shifty eyes peering from beneath long, matted, coal black hair, with fiddles tucked beneath their arms, they push their way through the delighted groups of country folk, sure of their ability to turn the occasion to their own advantage. Their women follow, tawny, pomegranate-tinted, graceful, untamed and untamable creatures, half-naked, also, with shameless, golden-brown, silken-skinned necks, shoulders, and arms, weighted and jangling with coins, and beads of every colour. And behind them again come the children, wild as fox cubs, guiltless of clothing as the hour they first saw light on the stark Karst hillside, or on the wind-swept *puzsta*.

Place is made for them. The Chief takes up his position in the middle of the yard, surrounded by his band. The Tsigane women and their sun-scorched youngsters squat in the foreground, a confused heap of picturesque rags, brown limbs, and vivid, heathenish faces, while the white clad, red capped peasants form the outer circle.

Jerking his curls over his sinewy shoulders till they look like so many black snakes crawling over his skin, the master suddenly whirls his arms frantically above his head, and as suddenly drops both them and his "*bas' alja*" * into position, and then sounds sweeter, and more seductive than the notes of a blackbird calling to his mate, soar across the spellbound silence. The leader's call is answered by the violins of his tribesmen, and soon the lazy, breathless afternoon is palpitating with Tsigane melody. They are playing, not the Slavonic or Magyar music, but one of their Oriental dances, which, as a rule, they keep for their own edification, when alone, on the spaces, under the stars. This is the genuine gipsy music, which can be appreciated, but never really comprehended by ordinary listeners, it may be, because the Tsigane scale possesses a number of extra notes within the

* The Tsigane word for violin—meaning "king of instruments."

octave—and is the scale, now long forgotten, that the earliest Greek musicians used, but which later generations laid aside in favour of the scale of equal temperament that eventually became the basis of all modern music.

The pack ponies outside the courtyard palings snort and stamp indignantly, the ugly, neglected gipsy ancients chew and puff gloomily at their long black pipes, the babies—which dangle from the pack ponies' saddles, lift up their voices and shriek for nourishment. But what does anything matter—who cares—so long as this entrancing, enervating, diabolical music wails, sobs, mocks, and enchants, and cajoles dull Christian minds and morals, and makes the coins to multiply on the tambourines!

Home-going peasants halt their lumbering, big-wheeled wicker-topped bullock waggons, and leave their oxen chafing under their blue-beaded headpieces and pink veils in order to hearken. The haunting melody, the mysterious Eastern faces of the players flaming with ecstasy, the sultry air, the exquisite surroundings, the perfume of roses, orange flowers, and oleanders, the pungent fragrance of the pines on the heights above, all unite to stupefy, and lull to languor.

Then, stealing up, from far away down in the city, comes the chiming of Church bells ringing for Benediction, warning the unwary to return from following after the strange gods before which these Tsigane pagans bow down and worship, and which, Christians though they be, the Slavs have never been able, and never will be able, to turn from as false and non-existing. For the Slavs love beauty and nature so passionately, so supremely, that they will not go through this world with their eyes shut and their senses held in bondage in the hope of reward in a life to come. And it was this extraordinary Slavonic adoration of the beautiful which made the task of their first Christian missionaries so difficult. The Gospel of Galilee was preached to them late, and by teachers who had already begun to reinterpret its meaning, and spoil its beauty. Saints Cyril and Methodius —the earliest Missioners to the Slavonic tribes—had adopted the blighting Christian idea that all which pleased the senses savoured of evil and paganism and must, therefore, be suppressed. They depicted the Christ, to the ancestors of these Slovenes, as "the ugliest Man who ever breathed." And—according to the tradition—this statement was greeted with shouts of objection: "No—no—we will not have this! If your Christ was repulsive, He cannot have been the Son of the Highest God!"

The Teutonic preachers of Christianity on the Baltic met with the same resistance to their teaching. For long years the Northern Slav tribes not only rejected, but made war against

the missionaries, and at last, only adopted Christianity under compulsion, their objection being that its laws made men "barbarous and cruel!" Their natures make it difficult if not impossible to eliminate the pagan spirit from the soul of the Slav. For, although the race is often spoken of as being possessed of the ideal which approaches nearest to the original Christ ideal, the Slavs have never yet adopted the notion that ugliness, joylessness and Christianity must, of necessity, go hand in hand. There is a certain old Slavonic legend told by Slav mothers to their children.* It relates of a very holy man who lived long ago and tried his best to please the All High One, by running away from everything that the All High One had made. This good man—so the tale runs—left his home and his kind parents, and climbed far into the stony mountains, and lived there all by himself, and did nothing at all for fear of doing something that might be wicked. He ate no pleasant food, and wore only one dirty and ugly garment, and he shut his ears when the birds sang and his eyes when the flowers blossomed, and he covered his head when a woman's shadow fell across his path. And he thought he was very holy and so did every one else think he was holy. Then one night he fell asleep and dreamt a dream. He dreamt that he was dead, and that his soul was hurrying along the road to Heaven. He thought that he flew past the first ring of stars, and the second ring, and the third, and that, at last, he arrived at the Gates of the Beautiful City. And above the City ramparts of sapphire and ruby the angels who kept watch looked down and saw him and bid him enter. And in the streets of the Beautiful City were great crowds of ordinary people; and he was astonished at this, for he remembered how much he had had to renounce to gain the privilege of entrance into the City, and he could remember none of his dead neighbours who had given up so much as he had. And so he marvelled how all these folk had got into Paradise.

And by-and-by he came to a very beautiful garden, wherein a clear river flowed, and wherein many roses and lilies were growing. And as he stood amongst the flowers he heard a voice like music calling his name. So he turned and saw a tall young man with a face like the sun for brightness. And the young man and he were quite alone. But the holy man tried not to see the young man's bright face, or listen to his gentle voice, for he wanted to find the All High One that he might tell Him how holy he had been on earth. Therefore he said, "Young man, I have no time to idle here, tell me where I can find God?"

* This folk tale is here written in the way the Slavs express themselves.

Whereupon the young man laughed and said, "I am God—do you not know Me?" Then the holy man began to shake, and said, "If you are God then where are the wounds in your hands and feet, and where are the thorns and sorrows on your brow?"

And again the young man smiled, and spoke: "Wounds and thorns and sorrows are ugly, and ugliness and sorrow belong not to Me, and cannot abide in My presence."

And the holy man fell down on his knees and hid his eyes that were dazzled by the glory of the White Christ's face, and by its splendid beauty. For he was so unaccustomed to all that is fair and joyful and pleasing that he could not endure to look upon God.

Then the White Christ laid His hand on the holy man's head, and asked, "How, My son, did you enjoy all the happy and wholesome and lovely and pure things I put on to the good earth for your pleasure—tell Me, and make Me glad?"

And the holy man felt a great pain and shame in his heart, and also a great fear. For he had never considered that because the world and all that is in it was created by God, so all upon it must also be happy, and wholesome, and lovely, and pure, and fit for man's enjoyment, and that it is only man who sees evil and ugliness and impurity in what the All High One has created.

So he trembled with shame and fear, and his shame and fear caused him to awake. And behold, the dark cave where he lay was bright with sunshine, and the birds were singing their morning song in the bushes down in the valley where a clear river flowed past a garden full of roses and lilies, wherein some pretty young maidens were plucking garlands for a wedding. And neither the rivers nor flowers nor angels of paradise now appeared to the holy man to be more beautiful, more splendid, or more lovely than the river and blossoms and maidens of earth.

Then, so happy was the holy man, that he ran down from the mountain and kissed all the pretty maidens many times, and helped them to gather the garlands. And he sang loudly with the birds, and then went home, and cheered his parents and worked to buy them comforts and pleasant food. And afterwards he went away and journeyed all over the world to behold the good and fair works of the All Highest, and he is travelling round the world still, for he is very well, and does not appear to grow old, nor is he tired of life nor does he want to go to Heaven for a very long time to come, seeing that he beholds the face of the All High One in the sunshine and in the shade. And wherever he goes he kisses the girls, and the children, and plays with the animals, and eats whatever excellent food he can get,

and drinks red wine, and thanks the Beautiful White Christ for all his love and kindness!

Meanwhile the sun is sinking very swiftly lower and lower in the cloudless, crimson flushed sky, dropping red gold to the far horizon. In a short time it will be night. But the Tsiganes continue playing. It seems as though they cannot weary—

"And they that are dead, in this radiant music, hear the moaning of doves in the olden,
Golden-girdled, purple pinewood, hear the moan of the roaming sea;
Hear the chant of the soft-winged songsters, nestling now in the fragrant golden,
Olden haunted blossoming bowers of Arcady;
See the soft blue veils of shadow floating over the billowy grasses
Under the crisp white curling clouds that sail and trail through the melting blue;
Hear once more the quarrel of lovers above them pass, as a lark song passes,
Light and bright, till it vanishes away in an eyebright heaven of silvery dew."

But at last even this wonderful, tireless music dies away in a long-drawn-out sigh, and in a few moments its sweetness is half forgotten in noise and bustle and confusion. Bullock-waggons get under way, to the sound of groaning axles, crackling whips, and much swearing. The crowd in the courtyard disperse, calling, "God go with you," one to the other. Apparently the innkeeper has given permission for the Ishmaelites to pitch their brown serge tents in the field beside the inn. His must be a generous and confiding nature! By sunrise he will, most likely, regret his hospitable impulse when he discovers that some good laying hens, and not a few of his household goods have vanished, being commandeered by his Tsigane guests, who consider it no crime to thieve, because, according to ancient tradition, God has Himself bestowed on their race the special right to steal, as a reward for the worthy action of a gipsy girl, who, during the three hours Christ hung upon the Cross stole one of the nails out of His feet, and so eased Him of some of His agony.*

* This gipsy legend offers a probable explanation of the transition from four nails to three nails in the crucifixes made during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. There was evidently at that period an argument between the Christian fathers as to the number of nails employed in the crucifixion. And the earliest known crucifix with three nails only is a copper one of Byzantine workmanship, dating from the end of the twelfth century, a date when the gipsies possessed a metallurgical monopoly. This crucifix must, therefore, have been the handicraft of gipsies, and the three nails were intended by its makers to prove that far from meriting calumny—that of the counter legend which asserts that it was a gipsy who forged the nails for Christ's crucifixion—they deserved all they could lay their hands upon for having stolen one of the four nails out of the Saviour's feet.

As well as being musicians and thieves, the Tsiganes are the blacksmiths, silver and copper workers and tinkers of to-day, as they were in the Byzantine age, and the large silver-headed sticks carried by the chiefs of the gang, are a sign that they practise their ancient racial profession. It is a mystery how the wretched ponies could have supported the heavy baggage which is now lying littered on their camping ground. Not only tent and tent poles, but huge bundles of straw, rags, smelting pots, tools, cooking utensils, small sacks of brass and silver ornaments, and foodstuffs of various kinds are jumbled together promiscuously near the fire which is already sending up darting tongues of flame into the opal-tinted dusk, throwing a lurid glare on dark, sharply cut faces and glittering gewgaws. The men of the tribe squat cross-legged in a knot greedily turning over the day's profits, and from time to time eyeing the steaming caldron suspended from a tripod set over the fire, which is being coaxed into activity by wind emitted from an odd kind of leather bag, resembling a bagpipe's, that is placed in a hole in the earth and points towards the embers. This bag, when squeezed by the young girl now manipulating it, forces a draught through the earth into the fire and proves a most effectual bellows. It is the same as the bellows used by the Tsiganes of four hundred years ago.* Two muzzled bears oscillate mournfully in the background, their gruntings proclaiming their species, which might otherwise be uncertain in the half light. Three or four emaciated curs are searching for fleas a stone's throw from the company, and the old people see hopes of a night's rest and something to eat, and are laying aside their black pipes in anticipation. The infants, which erstwhile dangled from the saddles, have found their natural resting places and supper on the breasts of their wild, unabashed mothers, who, like the men, are clustered in a bunch, and are conversing together in their melodious native tongue. And over beyond the courtyard the lamps are being lighted in the inn kitchen, from which the guests

* These gipsy bellows are mentioned in Bataillard's "Les Zotars," in Van Elven's article, and in "Die Metalle bei den Naturvölkern" of Richard Andree (Leip. 1884). And Patterson in "The Magyars: their Country and Institutions" (1869, p. 198) writes: "A curious consequence of their practising the art of the smith is that a gipsy boy is in Hungary called '*purde*,' which is generally supposed to be the equivalent in the gipsy language for 'boy.' It is really the imperative mood of the verb 'to blow,' for, while the gipsy father is handling the hammers and tongs, he makes his son manage the bellows." Arnold Von Harff, who travelled through Europe about the year 1497, describes the anvil and the bellows of the gipsies he encountered, whom he describes as—"poor, naked folk called Suyginer."

have departed, and where the family are making ready for the evening meal.

It is time to leave the heights, the pine trees, the open spaces and wander back and down—always down—to civilization and conventionality.

Transparent, changeful as a jewel are the moonlight nights of the Adriatic, where Monte Maggiore with its white cupolas lifts itself against a sapphire, gold-starred sky above a city of sparkling crystal, where warm breezes from the Quarnero waft in perfumes of citron, orange flowers, and sea tang, where the fireflies flit from flower to flower in the Giardino Publico, where the barbed opuntia leaves droop over their bristling stems, and the tall cypress trees taper like fairy minarets above the yellow-ribbed alöes, and where three hundred kinds of roses and two hundred varieties of geraniums breathe sweetness and beauty.

It is nine o'clock, and just such a night. Along the tree-fringed range of terraces which front the sea, along the boulevards, on the piazzas, lights are blazing, and from almost every garden and balcony comes the music of guitars or violins. The spaces before the restaurants are filled with rows of people, three deep, who have settled down to take their coffee and liqueurs, as usual, in the open air. Business combines with pleasure. Sociable groups chat and laugh and glance about them. In spite of the continually increasing throng there is no pushing or crushing. Genial civility and courtesy—generally Southern characteristics—seldom seem to fail. The upper classes of Fiume are inveterate *flanéurs*, and love to advertise both themselves and their finery. In the Piazza Adamich a military band is playing, and here smart ladies and swaggering blue or brown uniformed, leather-gloved officers stroll backwards and forwards "greeting," as the expression is, those whom they deem fit to receive such a favour, with rigid, severe, correct punctiliousness. This is purely artificial and characteristic of the cold, colourless, mechanical, coercive Hapsburg discipline, which surrounds Austrian and Hungarian officers—especially Austrian—stationed in the subjected lands with a curiously hostile atmosphere, an hostility which Italians and Slavs naturally feel when reminded, by the presence of these uniforms, that here in their homeland is the conqueror—an hostility that is aggravated by the proud self-imposed isolation of the wearers of the uniforms and which whispers: "*In deinem Lager ist Oesterreich.*" *

The beauties who have been cherishing their complexions during the day have emerged and are displaying their loveliness, which, in the upper classes of Istria, is Venetian in type. It is

* "In thy midst is Austria!"

amusing to watch them as they pass and re-pass, full of self-confidence, like most Southern women, even the plainest. Their mothers are, generally speaking, regular old huntresses, who seldom fail to settle their daughters satisfactorily in life, though love has little to say to the settlement. Still, flirtations of an ardent nature here, like everywhere else, continue and endure just so long as do the roses, or the nightingale's song, or the summer, or anything else that is pleasant and transitory. For example, that little lady exchanging passionate glances with the good-looking officer of His Imperial Majesty's 97th Infantry Regiment who occupies a neighbouring *café* table, will, more than likely, be married within the year to the stout, unattractive personage now oblivious to her charms and deeply engrossed in a game of chess with her father. And as for the Ober-Lieutenant, well—so far as he is concerned, the Serious—even his debts—has never troubled him—*le lieutenant s'amuse!* Life is one thing, after all, and the sordid, dreary business of life quite another!

As in New Fiume, so is it in Old Fiume. Neither time nor position, riches nor poverty can affect, alter, or control the immutable laws of nature. The orange trees and roses in Rjeka's tumble-down by-ways smell every whit as sweet as those in the Governor's gardens, and the dark-fringed eyes which glance from ancient, rusty balconies can do every bit as much mischief as those which sparkle from the verandahs of the palaces in the new town. If a military band is discoursing the latest waltzes to the exquisites on the electric-lighted, acacia-planted, white paved boulevards, in the little crooked thoroughfares there is also music, and who shall say that music heard amongst memories and in the company of ghosts is not the most entrancing?

Some tardy fishing boats are drifting dreamily out to sea, and the night wind carries back the refrain of the sailor's song, a Slavonic sea song many, very many, hundred years old. A woman in the top window of a mean house overlooking the quay is humming the first few bars of Gounod's "Ave, Maria!' an idler below joins in, and presently the whole neighbourhood is ringing with the sublime melody of the masterpiece.

It is the one language these racially divided people have in common. They think and they talk in diverse tongues, they are fellows only in music.

Up one of the narrowest and darkest by-ways of this quarter is a certain disreputable *café*, or night saloon. Unlike its more respectable neighbours it possesses doors which are kept shut, for all that takes place within its precincts is not for the edification of even Rabelaisian Rjeka. From behind these doors come the usual sounds of singing and merry making.

Push them open and enter a low-ceilinged room, the air of which is disagreeably vitiated. A raised platform occupies one end of the building. Tobacco fumes hang heavy in a violet haze. The place is crammed to the walls with a motley gathering of Italians, Slovenes, Bosnians, Serbs, Croats, and a sprinkling of Magyars. Every one is beating time to the wild music played by the Tsiganes, who are huddled close to the daïs, and every one is yelling approval of an olive-skinned, sombre-eyed, dancing girl, a Bosnian gipsy half-breed, who has just finished her dance and stands scornfully, her arms akimbo, a bouquet of blood-red carnations crushed under one foot, to receive the noisy plaudits. She makes a picture fantastic and sensual in her orange and scarlet dress and long tasselled purple shawl. Her thick plaits of blue-black hair fall on either side of her cheeks like as seen in ancient Egyptian portraits, and each plait is interwoven with silver discs as large as a crown piece.

The wine sold here is strong, a liqueur glass would be sufficient to send an unaccustomed brain reeling, and anything so small as a liqueur glass is unknown in this drinking den. The uproar increases, drowning the click of the billiard balls in the alcove, and the mutterings of the card and domino players, who, calmly indifferent to the clamour, continue their games.

There is a sudden nasty snarl, the half-breed has descended from the platform and is shaking her small fist in the face of a rival, an attractive aquiline-featured, fair-haired Croatian damsel whose strong, nervous fingers are ominously feeling for the knife in her belt. For a second the two glare like a couple of wild cats at each other, and then—out flies a long snaky, silver-flecked object which curls right across the Croatian's livid, fury-tortured face. The half-breed has made use of the favourite weapon of her kind, she has whipped her enemy over the mouth with her plaited, disc-weighted hair, and a maddened shriek, a volley of shrill curses, a flaming weal on a pale cheek proclaims the first round is to the Tsigane. A whirl of garments, and the combatants close on one another with nails and teeth. The onlookers jump to their legs and gather round the two swaying, glowing, gasping, shrieking women. Some shout for the half-breed, some for the Croatian. The conflict spreads. A burly Magyar horseboy precipitates himself into the fray cracking his great whip over the Slav girl's shoulders, now bare of covering, for her chemise has already been torn into ribbons. Whereupon a red-capped Serb leaps at the Hungarian's throat, and a love duel develops into a racial one in which the entire community becomes involved. In vain does the fat, long-nosed Jewess, enthroned aloft in her cash desk howl, with Israelitish energy, for

an impossible peace; in vain does the scraggy little Viennese waiter, who has sought refuge behind a couple of over-turned tables, snivel tearfully the word "police," and futile are his efforts to cool the angry passions of the combatants by spasmodic applications of soda water from a big syphon.

The swing doors easily open, and those who are wise, slip away through them, dishevelled possibly and perspiring, but at all events, knowing something of the race problem of the Dual Monarchy!

Scenes like this form part of everyday life in the Slavonic and Italian lands still under the sway of Franz-Joseph and give warning to all who have ears to hear and eyes to see that the racial passions in these countries must sooner or later burst into flame. And when they do, neither diplomats nor powers will prove capable of subduing the conflagration. As well might the little Austrian with his syphon of soda water hope to repress elemental forces.

When shall the dream of Napoleon come to pass and Illyria as a kingdom arise again? When—in the words of the poet Vodnik—"shall she stand in the full glory of liberty, and resting one hand on Gaul, give the other to Greece?" When shall she become—not only in poetry but in fact "the jewel of Europe"? Shall the great war decide?

CHAPTER X

ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS OF THE KARST: THE LAND OF THE PANDOURS

Up—up—up—rises the state railway from Fiume, over the Liburnian Carso to Zágréb. Up—up—from the city, its blinding glare, its heat, its noise, its humming life. With every mile climbed the view increases in splendour. Wider and wider stretches the Gulf. More and yet more islands creep into sight, scintillating like minute jewels on an azure silken robe. A hundred hitherto unseen rocks lift themselves from out the reef of the Archipelago. The very sky seems to expand. First the lovely valley of the Draga is traversed. Sheltered, vividly green, luxuriant, full of laughing streamlets, wooded ravines, deep and cool, rich orchards and meadows knee-deep with fragrant wild flowers. Scattered here and there are pink-walled creeper-enwreathed homesteads, built around large courtyards, and blossoming gardens. The yards are stacked with ox-waggons, with firewood piled against the barn sides, and each has its quaint procession of goats, geese, lambs, poultry, dogs and infants entering and emerging ceaselessly from the open door, like bees at a hive. At rare intervals there are villages with white or brightly painted houses, primitive inns, and market-places, where throngs of red-capped peasants come and go. Everywhere there is an atmosphere of youth—children, fresh flowers, and greenest grass, everywhere there is life.

Upwards zigzags the train, for a while crawling close against the mountain side, with engine facing the sea—a sea which becomes vaster and bluer with every turn of the road. Suddenly, the direction of going is reversed. The coast is left in the rear, and only cold, greyish white, towering mountain sides meet the gaze.

Then, the gates of paradise slowly close, and a spirit of desolation appears—that peculiar spirit of desolation which has its dwellings in the arid, calcined soil of the Karst. Age-parched, embittered, sterile age—succeeds to beautiful, happy, prolific youth. A hopeless blight has descended on Nature. Nothing is

here save the broad, grim sweep of the chaotic mountains. Wilder and wilder grow the surroundings. Patches of lava scoria lie bare and bald in dull contrast with the scanty grass. Every patch of miserable vegetation, every plot of wretched corn, every warped, Bora-tortured orchard, all are jealously enclosed by high stone walls. Once upon a time these stark hillsides were green, lovely and kindly as the valleys and uplands beneath, but human stupidity deliberately robbed them of the thick forests with which Nature had endowed them as a protection, and Nature in her wrath has hurled against both mountains and inhabitants all her grim, eternal forces, has given death where life should be, barrenness instead of fertility, sorrow in exchange for joy. The dark shadow of a curse haunts this region. Accursed seem the half-starved flocks, their depressed owners and their wretched dwellings. One wonders how is it that a place so very near to the glad blue dome of heaven can be so utterly gloomy.

At Verbovsko the curse is lifted—the Karst is passed.

The giant mountains scowling in the rear gradually become only mysterious, ungentle, stupendous memories. The scenery folds itself into smaller compass, and eyes which have been wearied and saddened by stony nakedness now rest gratefully on discreetly clothed hillsides. Yet still, a certain savageness lingers and does not entirely vanish until the lowest terrace has been reached. Then indeed the curse is removed and Nature's finger of light touches everything as if in remorse for her recent harshness. Dense, beautiful woods, whose tender leaves sway soothingly in the breeze; gurgling brooks, babbling of adventures in the desert, low mountains rising above big, waving, generous cornfields, revel in the golden haze of the afternoon sunshine. A palpitating heat lies over all, floats round the verdant uplands, quivers against the sky, beats relentlessly on broad, dusty highways along which great wooden waggons, piled high with baskets, fruit, vegetables, and white-clad peasants, and drawn by solemn, dun-faced, wide-horned oxen, are slowly moving. As on the sea-board side of the Karst, so here also, is youth and pleasant, joyous life. Here, too, are farmsteads nestling behind clumps of green bushes, and spreading vines. Spacious, sun warmed, fragrant is this land of Croatia. The grass edging its roads is starred with brilliant crimson pinks, yellow snapdragon, dandelions and violet daisies. The meadows are breeze-blown seas of fairy-delicate, perfumed colour, and man-high tower the bulky, spiked heads of the maize, more golden than the golden broom in the hedges, golden as the sunshine, golden as hair the of the grey-eyed Croat babies who play in the

cottage doorways. Groups of countryfolk, shouldering field implements, are making their way back to work after the midday dinner. Boys, with ponies on which are loads slung on either side of the saddle, herds of swarthy pigs, flocks of geese and turkeys, and girls, some carrying on their heads large wooden copper-hooped pitchers, others bearing equally big, flat, birchwood baskets filled with fruit or merchandise, drift along the field paths and across the open spaces. Even a fleeting glimpse from the leisurely moving train proves to the traveller that, physically, these Croat women do full credit to the splendid race to which they belong, the race which has given to the world so much that is lovely to think, act and look upon.

Walking gravely in single file, wearing the characteristic, pure white, single garments shaped like the chlamys of a Greek statue, that descend only to the calves of their naked brown legs, tall, supple of figure, strong, graceful, healthful, they are indeed very comely.

Along the route are but few stations, and these possess weird and unpronounceable names, Magyar names of course, for the Hungarians are masters here!

Before reaching Ogulin the aspect again alters. The broad, rich fields vanish, merging into a range of forest-clad hills, broken by deeply shaded, grassy ravines, with but an indication of habitations among the trees, whose background is not the sky, but the lovely blue of distant mountains, against which the less steep and nearer hillsides appear dark as emeralds in shadow. Here and there where these uplands are most rugged, the sound of water falls upon the senses with its strange mystery, and through the green gloom, glimpses can be got of inky dark streamlets and pools edged with the white, silver chords of Nature's music. So gloomy, so unfathomable seem these tiny lakes and rivulets that one wonders if there be any who could gaze into them without awe. Round their mossy, flowery banks, it may be, the mountain fairies conspire with their friends the water sprites to cast a spell of loneliness over the place. Yet away beyond the "little people's" dim, unexplored kingdom the merry sunlight touches pearly clouds, and the forests are wrapped in a soft, silver-gold and azure veil.

Then all at once this picture of loveliness is blotted out in the hideous mouth of a long, black tunnel, and when the sun is next seen it is shining on the white walls of Ogulin.

The platform is crowded. Evidently it is either a fair or a fête day in the queer, straggling little town, for it is full of country people and traders. Seen from the carriage windows every square inch of street and market-place appears surging

with fussy energy and business. In the cobble-paved square adjoining the railway there is a dense forest of horned ox heads and cart shafts. It would be difficult to imagine any place else in Europe where more carts could be gathered together than in Ogulin on a fête day. And such classical vehicles too, made of two long planks forming the bottom, having on each side a kind of ladder, possessed of no seats, and with wheels high and light. Such are the waggons of the Slav peoples from Leitha to the Black Sea, and far on into the interior of Russia. They remain, like so many Slavonic things, fashions and customs, unchanged by passing centuries, and the ancient Byzantine bas-reliefs show their antiquity. Each of these hundreds of carts has brought in a score of adults, never to mention children, who hail with delight a visit to, probably, the only town within their knowledge. Business in Croatia, whether it be religious or otherwise, invariably terminates in the exchange of gossip and feasting, which generally includes drinking; and *slivovitza*—a brandy distilled from plums—when taken on empty stomachs, or stomachs unaccustomed as a rule to richer food than maize porridge, mixed with oil or lard, is apt to have an exciting, though seldom intoxicating, effect, for an absolutely drunken Croat is rarely met with.

Trains in this country are never in a hurry, and as there is a wait of an hour before the journey to Karlovac can be resumed, there is ample time for a stroll amongst the booths, stalls and peasants, whose national costumes, though fundamentally the same, so far as the white linen breeches and white chemises are concerned, differ in detail according to the town or district they come from. Two branches of the Slav race—with many subdivisions—form the majority in this crowd, namely, Serbs and Croats. Though, in reality, one nation and one type, the two can easily be distinguished from each other by a certain slight difference in dress and physiognomy. The Serbian women wear short, yellow, or yellowy brown, frieze jackets over their linen tunics and zouaves, ornamented with very ancient Byzantine designs of conventional birds, flowers, butterflies and arabesques wrought in scarlet or orange-dyed leather, and "appliqued" on to the frieze. The Croatian women, on the other hand—at least in this district—cling to the rough sheepskins. The Serbians have a predilection for gorgeous rose, yellow, violet or blue headcloths, whereas the Croats wear them soft and white. The difference in dress is paralleled by a difference in personal appearance. In figure and feature the twin nations are alike, in colour and character they differ considerably. Darker complexioned, darker eyed, more exuberant in temperament, though placid of face, more prone to sudden passion, to violent joy and as violent

grief, the Serbs offer a strong contrast to their fair-skinned, chestnut-haired, grey or blue-eyed, weaker-natured, more easy-going and gentler kinsfolk.

Both Serbs and Croats on fête occasions appear in gala costume. Beneath sheepskins and frieze jackets, glitter beautiful, silver-embroidered, silver-studded zouaves and belts. At the farthest side of the market square several horses are being put through their paces. They are extremely swift, these wiry little beasts, and scarcely ever walk, even up hills! The most miserably ill-fed jades of the poorest peasants always trot. As foals, they are trained to follow the vehicles, when they may be seen jumping about in the rear like young deer. As horse dealers the Tsiganes excel; possibly because they are past masters in the art of cheating the *gorgio*,* possibly, too, because, being themselves children of Nature, they love and understand animals. They are here now, shuffling in and out between the horses and pack ponies on rag-swathed feet, the dust and dirt of a lifetime on their miserable, yet gay, rags and olive-tinted faces, the true Tsigane gleam in their narrow, shifty eyes.

The booths and stalls displaying coloured earthenware, pots, pans, fruit and vegetables are common to all Slav countries. There are the usual disgusting heaps of gory, uncured, ill-smelling sheepskins; the usual piles of *opankas*,† the usual multi-coloured mountains of homespun linen, wool, and embroideries, the usual charcoal-heated stoves, whereon mighty pots of maize and cabbage stew are simmering. Ogulin, its stalls, its merchandise, its colouring, does not differ from most other Southern Slavonic provincial towns. But the people met with here are possessed of a certain curious distinction. They have the look of fighters—they *are* fighters, though their spirit has been somewhat dulled by centuries of oppression. Listen to the deafening uproar which comes from one of the many shabby little *cafés* overlooking the market-place. From behind its dirty, red and yellow-curtained windows issue wild howlings, the crashing of broken glass, the thud of falling furniture. The door bursts open and out pours a flood of bellicose humanity. Bloody noses, bloody fists, a struggling mass of white-clad bodies, a screaming circle of women—and all about what? Oh! nothing of any consequence, perhaps a foot or a susceptibility has been trodden upon, or some national sore spot has been touched, or perhaps, some one has made advances to some one else's sweetheart. The merest nothing is sufficient to stir up the latent fiery, turbulent spirit which still

* Romany word for Christians or Gentiles.
† Sandal shoes.

lurks at the breasts, not only of the Serbo-Croats, but even of the soft-voiced, soft-featured, soft-mannered Croats. And be it remembered, Ogulin—to-day little more than a village—was once an important fortress within the borders of the ancient military frontiers, or *Confins*, which, in the days of Maria Teresa, encircled the Hapsburg Slavonic dominions from the Adriatic to the most easterly slopes of the Carpathians. From this district the famous *pandours* were recruited, the fear-inspiring "*Kaiserlicks*," the marvellous horsemen, the unerring marksmen who, so legend declares, could shoot the tassel off a comrade's cap, leaving him untouched; who throve on water and a slice of black bread per day, who bivouacked without tent or covering, who were the dread of Central Europe, and whose presence in Paris during the Great Revolution, would—so said the brother of Marie Antoinette—have been sufficient to quell the storm.

These *Grenzer*, both as labourers and soldiers, formerly owed the Hapsburgs service in return for the lands they possessed. According to the feudal system, the Emperor, as ruler of the independent Kingdom of Croatia, preserved the suzerainty, and the peasants had the use of the soil in perpetual fief, for which they rendered assistance in time of war as soldiers, in time of peace as labourers. At stated periods in those bygone days, the ancestors of these country folk, now trading in the market-place of Ogulin, were wont to march out of the town in two processions. One band carried muskets and went towards the frontier, the other bore spades and hoes and took their way to the fields. They gave the State one week out of three, and during this week of State service they were obliged to provide their own food in the fields, or, at the various guard-houses—*Czardak*—which, at intervals, were erected all along the frontiers. These guard-houses were raised on high, wooden piles in order to avoid the river floods and afford a better military outlook. Warriors and farmers by nature, these peasants kept watch and ward through the terrible biting winters, through the torrential rains of spring, when the Save bursts its banks and converts the land into one vast sheet of water, through the blazing heat of summer, they stood to their posts. If the Turkish enemy was descried coming up at night, the watchman who first sighted them set ablaze the great tar barrel which was kept ever ready for burning, fixed aloft on a pole. This first signal was answered by the fire of the neighbouring guard's barrel, and so the alarm was given and spread. Every borderer between the age of twenty and sixty was liable for military service, and, except agriculture, they were not permitted, unless as a special privilege, to follow any other trade or profession. The border women, too, were kept

under strictest military discipline. They were forbidden to marry except amongst their *pandour* kinsmen, and so become the mothers of future *pandours*. Consequently, the women of the *Confins* grew to be more than half soldiers themselves, and many of the younger ones actually took their turn at guard-house duty. The country was divided into military districts, each with its colonel who, attended by his staff, sat in the law court of the chief town in his district to administer "justice." These colonels were granted autocratic power of life or death, a power which they frequently abused. They occupied the finest houses within the *Confins*, and flourished on the fat of the land at the expense of their subordinates, whom they treated as dogs rather than as fellow human beings. The marvel is that Croatian loyalty endured as long as it did under these centuries of provocation. Unable to escape—for the borderer who dared to leave his regimental district without permission was punished by flogging, imprisonment, and frequently by death—in the eighteenth century these Slavs endured slavery helplessly and hopelessly along the valleys of the Save, the Unna, and the Danube.

Times have changed, however. The Military *Confins* have been abolished, and the borderers are now free to trade and travel where they please. And it pleases them only too well to emigrate. Life is still indescribably hard in Croatia-Slavonia, in Bosnia and Istria, and the evils and injustices, that seem inseparable from Austro-Hungarian rule where the Slavs are concerned, drive thousands of the inhabitants to seek fair play, good wages, and justice across the Atlantic, in the United States and Canada, in Australia and New Zealand.

Many British trading vessels come into the Adriatic ports, and as the Southern Slavs—even those who dwell so far inland as Ogulin—are born sailors, they find plenty of employment on such ships. On them they experience the advantages of British law, and of British justice. They learn to reason that if others are free why should they, too, not enjoy liberty? and when they revisit their homes they impart this gospel of liberty to their families and the villagers around. The old fighting instinct which, for centuries, their oppressors encouraged, is, as it has been said, still alive. Both the Magyar and Austrian Governments have of late become alarmed. The Slav peril looms threateningly on their horizon.

How is it that the faces of the Croatian women at first sight seem so familiar? Where has one seen them before? Glance where, seated on some upturned baskets, a group of young mothers are nursing their babies in full view of the public gaze. Look beyond them at some girls who are coming in this direction,

walking lightly as if treading on air. Their heads are enveloped in billowy masses of white linen. Their reddish-brown hair is smoothed over their ears, With wide foreheads, with pale, clear, softly-rounded cheeks, terminating abruptly in short, pointed, deeply-cleft chins, with highly arched, delicate, scarcely visible eyebrows ; with half-closed, long-lidded eyes ; with demurely-folded, upward curving lips, and an expression of serene gravity, these women faces seem to flit into memory as do faces seen in a dream. A moment's thought and there comes to mind those golden-crowned Madonnas of Botticelli, to the memory a recollection of the great Byzantine Virgin, into whose keeping Buonaguida gave the city of Siena, and across the mind's eye floats a vision of Raphael's Madonna of the Chair, his Sistine Virgin—the face of the World's ideal Mother—reposeful, lovely, innocent. It is a curious and remarkable likeness to be explained perhaps by the fact that the Slavs of these districts—Croatians and Slavonians—in ages gone by, had much intercourse with the Italians. Venice knew them well. There is nothing, consequently, improbable in the supposition that the old Italian masters employed Slav women as models, seeing that the type is much more spiritual and refined than the Latin.

A noticeable fact in the Slavonic countries, of Croatia-Slavonia, Bosnia and Istria, is the absence of social intimacy between the sexes. Men and women, except sometimes during the brief, very brief, period of courtship rarely meet as equals. Note how the various groups of countrypeople journey homeward in small bands from the market square, each band made up of the various large families who constitute a village community. Every family has its ox-waggon, and there are, as a rule, six or seven such waggons to a village. Round these vehicles the owners walk in little troops—the sexes invariably apart. As has been said elsewhere a Slav family represents a small community in itself. The patriarchal mode of living still prevails throughout the less frequented districts of the Southern Slav lands of Austria-Hungary, and also in Serbia. This arrangement is termed the *Zadruga* (*i.e.* association), and under the *Zadruga* system a family, in all its generations and branches, resides together under one roof upon a common and indivisible domain. Nowadays the *Zadruga* is not what it was. Modern life has crept in to disturb its old-world simplicity. Innovations have interfered with its primitive serenity. Formerly nothing could break up a *Zadruga* but the death of all its members. Each *Zadruga* had, and still has, as its chief, its head, the *Gospodar*, or Stareshina,* in whom the internal as well as external administration of the family is

* Lord or elder.

vested. The *Gospodar* possesses supreme and indisputable control over the men of his household, and, acting under his directions, the principal woman of the *Zadruga*, as a rule the wife of the *Gospodar*, supervises the labours of her female relatives. All money and property are held in common, and are distributed under the direction of the *Gospodar*, who awards to each member his or her share. A daughter on marriage receives a dowry, but can claim no share of the common family property. In other words the *Zadruga* of the Slavs corresponds exactly to the Roman *gens*, the *cognatio* of the German, and the *lignage* of the communes of the ancient Celts. Some families are wealthy, some are poor, as may here be observed, for, from the number of coins and ornaments on the women's necks, the harness of the oxen, and the embroideries on the men's vests, a pretty fair guess can be made as to the circumstances of the household to which their wearers belong, and the absence of sex equality is plainly shown in the manner in which these families segregate themselves. Moving some yards in front of the waggon go the men, showing in their demeanour their belief in their complete superiority over their female kind. In most Slav lands, but especially here, the masculine element is all powerful. Parents consider it a calamity when a daughter is born, and there is a saying : " When a male child is born nine *Zadrugas* sing, but when a female child is born, nine *Zadrugas* weep," and a father will say : " I have a little son, and, forgive me, two daughters." Some parents actually forbear to mention their daughters when referring to their children ! And this silent, though kindly, contempt of their sex is accepted as a matter of course by the women. For instance, a Croatian or Serbian woman is never supposed to cross the road when a man is passing. When they lay out the meals they must place the food respectfully before the chief male of the household—the *Gospodar*—then bow low before him and kiss his hands, and afterwards the hands of all the other men. Even the old grandmothers are expected to kiss the hands of their grandsons ! When meeting on the road, a woman may never greet a man ; he must be the first to salute, if it so please him, with the words : " God assist thee," to which she may then reply : " God assist thyself." Nor must a woman remain seated when a man addresses her : she must arise, and if spinning—and when is a Slav woman not spinning ?—she must thrust her spindle out of sight behind her back. A wife should never speak of her husband by his name, to her he is simply " He." As a sequence to this masculine domination, the women are allotted all the heaviest work. Old or young they must rise at cockcrow, and stay up at night till the last of the menfolk have retired to rest. Not only

is all the spinning, weaving, washing, knitting, sewing, cooking, bread-making, milking, cheese-making, child-bearing and tending, sick nursing and doctoring given over to the long-suffering females, but also an equal share of the outdoor work on the farm. They must till the land, sow, reap, herd the cattle, dig out the heavy clay, of which the pottery is made, pound it with axes, mix it with chopped goat's hair, pour on it boiling water, shape it into vessels with their hands, and set the pots, thus formed, in the brick ovens to bake. They have to cut and sew the *opanke*—the Slav national shoe—and even take a hand in building the houses. What wonder then that the men have a supercilious condescending aspect, and consider it beneath their dignity to walk as equals and friends beside such human beasts of burden! The place for the women is behind the ox-waggons. So they follow meekly in the rear carrying on their heads all the merchandise which cannot fit on to the cart. Yet they move like queens for all that; the heavy loads serve to strengthen their necks and their graceful, supple bodies, while the placid, old-world attitude in which they fold their hands and arms across their breasts adds still further to their womanly dignity.

Every road and outlet to the surrounding country is alive with many such little family troops wending their tired way home, but no matter how weary they may be, every troop is singing. One group starts a song, the next takes it up, and so on, until it is echoed far away along the hot, white roads, by other bands almost out of view. It would be as easy to describe or explain a chord of music or the tinting of a flower as describe or explain these Croatian songs, for, like the music of the Tsiganes, the music of the Slavs is indescribable and unexplainable. Sweet, sad, wild, fantastic, ending always on a high, unsatisfied, yearning minor note, it belongs to a people who have been and are wrapped in unhappiness and obscurity, to a race which belongs neither to the East nor to the West, a race whose origin is unknown, and whose future is obscure.

Excepting its inhabitants, there is not much to interest in Ogulin. There are two places of worship, one belonging to the Orthodox (Eastern) Church, the other Roman Catholic. Neither of them can boast any beauty of architecture, and both are poor and dirty. The streets, comprised of two-storied, white houses, are ill-paved, and both houses and streets are uncleanly. The touch of the lazy, brilliant, sensual, Orient seems to penetrate everywhere.

The hour of waiting is at an end, and there is just time to wander back to the station where only the Magyar tongue is spoken by the officials, and where every notice is written in the

hated language of the nation which, having won its own national rights and liberty, now bullies and oppresses another nation because it, too, struggles for and demands the same racial and national freedom. Yet, override and oppress as they may, the Hungarians, like the Austrians, know well that, in spite of all they may do to hinder and curtail Slavonic progress, the emancipation of the scattered and down-trodden Slav peoples is sure to come, and once the tide has turned, as wrote the Magyar poet, Eôtvös: "Hungary will be an island lost in the midst of an all-encircling Slav ocean."

Round the railway carriages an eager crowd of girls and little boys are trying to dispose of the contents of their huge fruit baskets. It would be utterly impossible to carry away, let alone consume, the quantity of fruit obtainable here for the sum of twopence! Melons, figs, pears, luscious cherries, gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries, peaches, there is little in the fruit world unprocurable in Croatia. And so wonderfully pretty are these gazelle-eyed Croat maidens, that whether able or not to consume or carry away the goods offered, one must perforce buy from them. And, how merrily they smile! Up go the corners of their mouths, sideways dart the soft glances of their brooding, Madonna-like eyes, and then, like rippling music, comes the old, old Slavonic salutation from lips bent to kiss the stranger's hands—"Christ, He lives!" to which the answer is, "Yes—to the ages eternal!"

The last view of Ogulin market-place is as full of confusion as the first. Alarmed by the clanging of bells, and shrieking of whistles, which never fail to announce the departure of a train in Slav countries, the beasts in the vicinity of the railway station run amok. Pack ponies shy and violently struggle to get rid of their burdens, calves jump furiously in all directions, upsetting everything and every one within reach, long-limbed peasants whirl their arms over their heads, emitting unearthly shouts, the escaped pigglings are captured and slung over their owner's shoulders, wriggling and squealing to the last. Only the oxen retain their unalterable unruffled calmness.

With a jerk and a wrench the journey is once more resumed, and in a few minutes the town and all sign of it—for suburbs do not exist around Croatian towns—has disappeared, and far as eye can see, extend sunlit, golden cornfields and green vineyards, unintersected by confining hedges, their rolling immensity broken only by widely separated little villages, mere clusters of white, brown-thatched dwellings, and by great white roads, fringed with poplars or willows. Along these, small trailing troops of countryfolk are drifting into the landscape, each figure in

them standing out separately, a glowing spot of colour, through the clear transparent atmosphere.

Peace and silence reign, and as the evening advances, blue shadows hurry across the cornfields and orchards, and a soft breeze springs up and rustles the long reeds on the marsh lands where live myriads of wild duck, moor hens, and storks, and in whose back waters thousands of wild geese breed. The sun sinks to a level with the vast landscape, twilight descends, and through the dusk a red tongue of fire shoots up, and shows a Tsigane encampment, with its dark tents and crouching, shadowy figures.

And by the time the stars have all come out in the purple sky Karlovac is reached, the sturdy little fortress town of the Emperor Charles, whose name it bears.

Karlovac—Winter, 1915–1916.

But a year has passed and the war has come; and let us picture Karlovac as it is under present conditions. It is the weekly fair day, but, although nine o'clock in the morning, there is no sign of life in the big market-place. The empty square is swept by an icy, cutting wind. It is deathly cold, and the sky is a cruel steely grey. Only a few people are about in the streets, and these few are soldiers. The many barracks—for Karlovac is a fortified town—are full of troops, newly called up reservists, Magyars and Austrians, for the Croatians have been sent elsewhere, "they are not to be trusted," say the authorities. Croatia is a Slavonic land, and its inhabitants have—so the Austrian-Hungarian Government declares—displayed "treacherous sympathy with Serbia." Indeed, this "treachery" has been "so widespread that strong measures have had to be taken," and, on an average, a score or more Serbo-Croats are hanged every week or two in this very market-place. It is necessary to instil abject terror into the "swinish" peasants, and stringent means have been adopted to enforce obedience and to inculcate loyalty. Everything that tends to keep alive the Slavonic spirit has been crushed. All the able-bodied men—often indeed the semi-blind—the deaf and the crippled—have been forced into the ranks and sent to the Italian front, probably to be exterminated by the army of the nation which Austria has, for long years, persistently endeavoured to poison against them. That part of the population that has been left at home, old men, women and children, has been the subject of a frightful reign of terror. Wholesale prosecutions of Serbo-Croats for high treason, for *lèse majesté*, for trivial offences against the military authorities, for all sorts of imaginary crimes, are of daily occurrence. The

victims are poor, miserable, helpless and ignorant folk, simple peasants, shopkeepers, school teachers, and such like. An incautious remark, the most feeble and timid expression of Slavonic sentiment, is sufficient to bring the utterer to the scaffold, or to penal servitude. But it is strange that the milder of these punishments, and not death, was given to Bogdan Sviračević, the Mayor of Bugjanovci, who, during the occupation of his town by the Serbians, preserved public order, at the request of the latter, and did not refuse them supplies.* Even children are not exempt from punishment. In Subotište ten weeping, trembling little creatures, varying in age from four to seven years, were court-martialled for offering flowers to a passing Serbian regiment! The Orthodox faith, held by half the population, has been sternly suppressed, and the Orthodox Clergy have been imprisoned. All Croatian newspapers have been prohibited, on the grounds that they "endangered the interests of the conduct of the war." Prominent members of the Sabor have had to flee from the country, and those who failed to escape have been arrested, sentenced to penal servitude, and had their property confiscated, "for the benefit of the State." The Imperial amnesty, loudly proclaimed at the beginning of hostilities, by the Emperor Franz-Joseph, has not been accorded so far as the Southern Austrian Slavs are concerned. Germans, Magyars, Roumanians, etc., who had been imprisoned previous to the war, for political offences, profited by the amnesty, but, "owing to reasons of State," the Southern Slavs were retained in prison. In many of the Croat villages and towns, schoolboys have been brought to trial for having "organized secret political societies with a view to propagating the Jugo Slav idea," and these piteous, penniless, unlettered lads, of fourteen and fifteen years, have gone gallantly to the gallows, or to penal servitude. All live stock, corn and maize, and firewood, have been commandeered by the Government. Peasant homes have been ransacked over and over again for human food and fodder; and the latest order, issued by the Austrian Ministry of War, is, that "those excellent vegetables, nettles, are, in future, to be considered as State property, and the countryfolk are to see to it that all nettle plants be cut and immediately brought in to the nearest military station. Moreover, all maize straw"—the only fuel left to the people—"must without delay be given over to the military authorities, *without payment.*" Endemic cholera is raging everywhere, and typhus and consumption. Official announcements refrain from giving

* This case is interesting inasmuch as it shows how differently the Austrians and Germans regard such an action when they occupy an enemy territory.

the figures, but the endless funeral processions that wend their way to the cemeteries afford plain proof of the awful toll which the Destroyer is taking.

What wonder then that this, usually cheerful and gay, market-place of Karlovac is to-day deserted!

Outside the barrack gate that leads into the square sentries pace up and down with fixed bayonets, and their footsteps ring sharply against the rough pavement. From within the yard and from the fort on the hill comes, every now and then, the shrill note of a bugle. A couple of frightened, furtive-eyed townsfolk flit up a side street, hurrying as if from some relentless pursuer.

In the centre of the open space, where formerly stood the booths and stalls of the sellers of fruit and vegetables, there now towers aloft the Dreadful Thing that has become a part of Croatian life—and death.

The gallows of Karlovac is high, and its ropes are strong, and they dangle and whistle in the wind, as if impatient for work. The blinds have been drawn in every window, and no one ventures abroad, for at nine-thirty there is to be an execution, and it is an ugly sight. Two women, a boy, and an old man have been convicted by court-martial of treason, and all petitions for mercy have been refused.

Again the bugle sounds shrilly. The barrack gate swings open, and a company of Austrian soldiers of the line march out, and form into a square about the place of execution. Another moment and, pushed forward between a double row of bayonets, the doomed four make their appearance. The old man, clad in bright scarlet jacket and white linen trousers, seems scarcely capable of movement, and leans for support on the two women the youngest of whom is a mere girl of perhaps seventeen summers. All wear the quaint, picturesque Serbo-Croat dress, and, with the exception of the old man, none of them show any signs of fear or distress.

But why describe this very ordinary scene? Not a villager throughout the length and breadth of Croatia-Slavonia, and Bosnia, and Herzegovina, and Dalmatia and Istria but is familiar with a similar spectacle. This old man of eighty, this pretty girl of seventeen, this woman of forty—the mother of five helpless children—and this boy of fifteen are only four out of numberless, hapless, ignorant, Slavonic peasant folk, who are now learning the meaning of Teutonic *Kultur!*

Balkan Peasants.

[*To face page* 160.

CHAPTER XI

CROATIA: A LAND OF MANY COLOURS

"From the Tatra to the Black Mountain, from the Giant Alps to the Urals, resound the words—'Heaven for the Slavs.'"

In spite of Magyar denial, Croatia is historically an independent kingdom, linked only to Hungary, as Hungary is linked to Austria, through the person of the Hapsburg monarch. Its people are still inspired by recollections of their independence in the eleventh century, and by later recollections of the victorious army led by the Croatian patriot Jellachich in 1848. They are filled with hopes of national liberty and with ambition; they wish to expand northwards into Hungary, westwards into Cisleithan Austria, and on the south to absorb Dalmatia and Bosnia. Before the present war began, their main object was to substitute Trialism for Dualism in the Austrian Empire. It is more than probable that most of them are now hoping for national freedom outside of the Austro-Hungarian dominions.

The Austro-Hungarian province of Croatia-Slavonia lies between Austria proper on the north-west, Hungary on the north-east, and Bosnia and Servia on the south. It possesses a population of 2,400,000, all pure Slavs belonging to the great family which has Russia for its head. They are divided into two tribes, namely the Serbo-Croats, or Serbs, and the Croats proper, both of whom speak the Serbo-Croatian language. This language has three main dialects and is written in two different characters, the Croats using the Latin alphabet, the Serbs the Cyrillic, as reformed by Vuk Karadzic. The province is composed of two portions, differing widely from each other in character, the Croatia of the plains and the Croatia of the mountains. The first, or north-eastern district, comprises broad fertile plains, rich with vines and luxuriant foliage, sheltered here and there with beech and oak forests, where great herds of swine find abundant provision. It lies between the rivers Drave and Save, extending from Friedau in Styria and Rann in Carniola as far as the frontier town of Semlin, which faces Belgrade across the

river. The second, or south-western district, is a lofty, desolate, but exceedingly beautiful highland region connecting the mountain system of the Balkans with the Karst above Trieste. It descends suddenly into the Adriatic at Fiume. The capital of Croatia is Zágréb (Agram), which in English means "beyond the rocks." It overlooks the River Save from a height on the spurs of the Styrian Alps and has 80,000 inhabitants.

The natural beauties of Croatia are unsurpassed. In the mountainous portion of the country mighty snow-capped peaks rise tier upon tier, their lower slopes descending into great, lonely, primeval forests of pine, fir, and oak. Exquisite little lakes, reflecting a thousand tints, fringed with ferns and strange mosses, streams which clatter and dash over big grey boulders, offer a home to pink-speckled trout and grayling. In the forests and on the heights all sorts of game and wild things abound—marmots, polecats, chamois, bears, roebuck, wild boar, golden eagles, vultures. Those who love sport will find Croatia a veritable paradise. The peasants are all born hunters, hunting being their favourite amusement.

And Croatia of the plains is not less lovely. There is a fascination about the wide landscape devoid of the hedges, walls and all artificial obstacles, which give English scenery a garden-like aspect. Great open spaces, swept clean by the wind, stretch for miles and miles under a brilliant blue sky. For however cold it may be in winter, the sky is, generally speaking, cloudless, and the atmosphere is always clear and bracing. In May when the young vines uncurl and shed fragrance, and the fields are purple with millions of violets giving out an almost overpowering sweetness, when the forests are carpeted with snowdrops, it is a delight merely to breathe. But, if beautiful at this season, the plains are even lovelier in June when the rose plantations are in full bloom, when fuchsias and geraniums glow in the hot sunshine, and a thousand different species of wild flowers, many of which are not found outside this region, blaze in a perfect riot of colour. The perfume and beauty of a Croatian midsummer day or night can never fade from the memory of those fortunate enough to have enjoyed it. Wild mignonette, great scarlet poppies, blue and heliotrope cornflowers, snapdragon, lilies, orchids, harebells, stonepinks, wild thyme—these are only a few of the best known flowers which blossom so profusely. There are others strange enough to attract botanists, who would discover here a whole country seemingly planted out for their inspection.

The people inhabiting the mountainous portion of Croatia are tall in stature and dark-complexioned; in temperament

they are sullen, revengeful and brave. They come of the race which produced that famous and terrible corps of Croatian volunteers, "the Pandours" (see p. 152), which fought through the Wars of Succession, when Maria Theresa struggled for Empire. Clad as to-day in Oriental dress, with fez and streaming red mantle, carrying the horse-tail and crescent in lieu of colours, they rushed to the slaughter of their enemies, and according to Germanic legend committed terrible crimes on defenceless peoples. Peaceful Bavarians and the simple peasantry of the Rhine valley still frighten their children into obedience with the threat—"Hush! if you are not good the Pandours will come and eat you." The hillmen wear closely fitting small caps, black, red or green embroidered zouaves, red or blue baggy trousers gathered at the knee, gorgeously coloured mantles or sheepskins, and sandals of untanned cowhide. Every article of their attire, even their underlinen, is richly embroidered and braided with multicoloured silks and wools. Their zouaves and jackets are heavy with innumerable silver and zinc buttons, and their belts, ten or eleven inches wide, are of leather studded with silver bosses. In these belts they carry their inseparable companions, long curved knives with embossed silver hilts, pistols, and cartridge boxes. Frequently, too, they are armed with long, silver-mounted rifles. The hill women are also tall and strong, perhaps somewhat over robust in figure for perfect female beauty, but with soft, sombre faces, showing their passionate proclivities only in the slumberous depths of their dark eyes. But so calm and gentle are they in movement and speech, that it is difficult to believe them to be as truly daughters of the god of war as are their sister Slavs the Montenegrins. They wear short and very full linen or woollen skirts gathered into their waists in many heavy folds, and embroidered at every seam with blue, scarlet or green cross-stitch. From their shoulders hang short pieces of gaily-coloured cloth, decorated with patches of silk or leather sewn on in the geometrical designs so dear to Croat taste. On their heads are caps, flat or pointed in form, over which are folded brilliantly-coloured kerchiefs. Their necks are entwined with rows upon rows of beads of all colours and sizes, and in their belts of embroidered linen or canvas they also carry knives. A highland woman's married or single state is advertised by the colour of her stockings. A girl wears white; a married woman, blue; and a widow, red.

On the sea-facing slopes of the mountains live the Uskoks. These people may be classified as mountain folk as well as seafarers. They are descended from the dreaded pirates who once had their dwelling amongst the lower hills overlooking the

Adriatic, and waged a desultory warfare against the Republic of Venice (see *ante*, p. 125). To-day they are recognized as one of the finest seafaring races in Europe, and the cream of the Austro-Hungarian navy is recruited from them.

On leaving the mountains and descending to the plains the people, like the climate, change. Faces become softer, thinner, sadder, more patient, complexions become fairer, blue eyes take the place of black. The dress also alters. The men of the plains wear broad-brimmed black hats as often as caps. Coloured breeches and heavy mantles are replaced by garments of white homespun linen. No matter what the weather may be or how muddy the roads or soiling their work, the Croatian lowlanders never discard their white clothes; yet they seldom appear bedraggled or dirty. The whiteness of the peasant's clothes is one of the remarkable things in this strange country. Long white linen trousers and loose, sleeveless linen shirts open at the breast are the principal articles of a lowlander's costume. In winter, brilliantly coloured zouaves keep the intense cold from striking the lungs; and when the temperature falls more than usual below zero, thick black coats or sheepskins are worn.

The lowlanders, like the highlanders, wear wide belts ornamented with red woollen tassels and silver; but the article on which they lavish the most attention and affection is the "*torba*," an enormous pouch, at least two feet wide each way, made of finely woven horsehair embroidered with scarlet and silver thread, and edged with a sweeping fringe of horsehair, red silk and silver tassels. From his "*torba*" no self-respecting man will part either by night or day. It is the receptacle of all his personal treasures—wooden pipes, money, papers, religious emblems, provisions, cards, dice (for the Croatian who is not an inveterate gambler is still unborn), and, last but not least, his flask of *slivovitza*, a kind of brandy distilled from the fruit of the prune trees which border the roads for miles throughout Croatia.

The women of the plains when clustered together in groups give the impression of a summer garden in full blossom. Their short white linen skirts, reaching barely to their knees, are drawn into multitudinous gathers at the waist, and are so stiff with starch as to stick out almost horizontally like the conventional dress of the ballet dancer. White linen aprons embroidered with blue or red thread are worn over the skirts, and help to conceal the assortment of comestibles that the women generally carry in their skirts—cakes, fat bacon, sausages, black bread, and little flasks of *slivovitza*. They exchange these delicacies with one another on greeting. Their head-dress

consists of broad flat caps or white silk kerchiefs, worn as Turkish turbans over well-smoothed hair. Their brightly coloured zouaves are plentifully bedecked with beads and buttons, while on their hands they display as many heavy silver rings as their fingers will hold. On high days and holidays their ivory clear cheeks are rouged with some home-made vegetable cosmetic, and their silky hair brought into sleek submission by the application of goose fat.

In the lowlands the costume of the men is the same both for Serbs and Croats; but the Serb women can easily be distinguished from the Croat women by their extraordinary garments. Their chief article of clothing is a white linen chemise which is slipped on over the head, has no fastening, and is slit up each side seam to above the knee. This chemise is confined round the waist by a heavy silver-adorned leather belt, and into these belts, when snow is falling or the roads are muddy, the women tuck the lower half of their chemises, oblivious of the fact that, having no undergarments whatever, they are exposing their persons both to the public and to the weather. But however much they may ignore the comfort of the lower half of their bodies, the Serb women are extremely careful about the treatment of their shoulders and heads. The former they cover with a thick yellow frieze jacket gorgeously embroidered in every colour imaginable; the latter they contrive to make as ugly as possible by dragging every hair out of sight, and folding vivid scarlet or yellow kerchiefs across their foreheads, tying the ends into two outstanding points behind the ears. The Serbs and Croats of both sexes wear untanned cowhide sandals, laced to their ankles over linen swathings or white wool socks.

While the traveller is noting these peculiarities of Croatian costume, he will have had time to discover that the Hungarian Government, through fear and hatred of the Slavs, deliberately prevents the progress of the country. The service of the State railways is arranged of set purpose to confine Croatian trade to Hungary and hinder its development elsewhere. Even communication with Vienna is made difficult, for the Magyars are afraid of the Austrians coming to an understanding with the Slavs. In other respects the railways are most inconvenient, for the station is usually a considerable distance from the town it serves, and the road connecting the town with the station is as a rule appallingly bad. The hotels are worse, except in Zágréb, the capital. But tourists who can face discomfort will find in Croatia an unspoilt country and an unvulgarized people, a wealth of historical interest and unexplored riches of natural beauty and romance. These are no small compensations for lack of luxury.

The best way to see the country is to live with a Croat family. Native hospitality is almost unlimited, and a letter of introduction from a consul to any local magnate, doctor, priest, or lawyer, secures the stranger a welcome. The domestic life of the Croats in most respects bears the impress of primitive simplicity. There is but little difference among the classes ; a gentleman's household is conducted much in the same way as a respectable farmer's or peasant's. No one is rich, and if incomes were balanced, it would be found that the peasants are frequently better off than the gentry. There is a poorer class known as "the little peasants," descendants of the former serfs, and their poverty is extreme. The patriarchal system though declining in all classes still exists, and it is customary for all the branches of a peasant family to occupy the same house. The affairs are conducted by a chief, generally the grandfather or oldest male member, who manages the family property. His patriarchal sway is supreme. He has absolute control over the accounts, and orders the labour of the males, while his wife, or the oldest woman in the home, sees to the well-being and industry of the women and girls. The head of a family is called the *Gospodar*, and these heads of households often meet together for consultation on village affairs. A Croatian family is, in fact, a kind of primitive association in which the members have all things in common ; and a Croatian village may be described as a similar association on a larger scale. Scarcely acquainted even by hearsay with the refinements and comforts of modern life, the Croats are simple in their habits and have but few wants.

A large country farmhouse may be taken as an example of a typical Croatian home wherein dwell several branches of one family. The house is large, airy, and as a rule one-storied. The foundations are of wooden blocks raised two or three feet above the level of the ground, and there is generally a rough verandah encircling the whole building. The house itself is built of either wood or clay. Its front door leads into the "great room" which corresponds to the great hall of our forefathers. This is the apartment used by all members of the family for meals, work, or recreation. In the corner stands a gigantic open stove over which, even in summer, hangs suspended an immense pot of water, which serves for the preparation of food. The floor is made of stamped earth. Great smoke-blackened rafters supporting the roof act as shelves for crockery—which is very beautiful in Croatia—and knives and forks are stuck in niches. The windows are small and have neither blinds nor curtains. A big carved table occupies the centre of this living-room, and round the walls stand towering, heavily carved chests and unyielding

wooden chairs. A basket filled with blocks of wood is placed near the stove ; coal is never used, and when the terrible winter comes on, strangers are apt to find even the largest wood fires insufficient for comfort. Wood-chopping is a heavy winter labour, and is often relegated with other disagreeable tasks to the women. Masculine Croatia dislikes wood-chopping. A story is told of a Croatian farmhouse where the female inmates consisted of an old bedridden grandmother and some small girls. As no women were available for chopping the wood the difficulty was solved by pulling an entire but slender pine tree across the floor of the living-room, one end of the tree being placed on the hearth, while the other end remained on the verandah ; as the tree was consumed it was pulled gradually into the house. The kitchen opens out of the living-room. Here, again, the stove is open, and round the walls hang sausages, dried pig-meat, bacon sides, whilst from the rafters are suspended any number of sheep, cheeses, bunches of garlic and onions. On the wall near the stove, basking and gurgling in the warmth, usually dangle one or two pillow-encased babies. Round the walls stand big jars of gherkins, and sacks of meal, of which gigantic loaves are baked in a wicker basket under a heap of live charcoal. In the centre of every Croatian table is an earthenware pitcher of spring water, for Croats are tremendous water drinkers. In the kitchen also are at least two large oak bedsteads, and in winter other large beds are brought into the living-room and kitchen from the bedrooms. These two apartments become the sleeping-places of the married members of the family, the unmarried folk accommodating themselves in the stove corners or in byres and stables, where they huddle up for warmth in their smelly sheepskins as closely as possible to their dumb companions. In a Croat bedroom there is little save the beds, the marriage chest attached to each double bed, and the family weaving loom. In every room and over the entrance door is a crucifix, and ikons and religious pictures decorate the walls, which are composed of yellow baked clay. A dairy is attached to one side of the house, and in it are stored many and strange articles, field implements, washing-tubs, baskets used in vintage times, casks of wine, tall churns and butter-making necessities. Cream is churned fresh every morning and the butter placed to cool in water for some hours, then beaten, and, lastly, boiled and seasoned and sent to the market. Cream cheeses peculiar to Croatia are flavoured with caraway seeds, sage, and invariably with garlic. Garlic is never absent in this land. From the time one crosses the frontier till one recrosses it, the smell of garlic haunts one's throat, one's nostrils, hands, and clothes. All

food has abandoned its own flavour for that of garlic! A Croat house reeks of smoke and—garlic!

Croatia is first and foremost an agricultural country, and its wealth consists in cattle of all kinds, especially swine. Bullocks are employed to do the heavy work on the land. The native horses are small and swift and are harnessed into carts and carriages three in a row, decked out in gorgeous red and yellow trappings with bells. Bees are kept by every peasant family, but up to the present bee-keeping has been conducted on very primitive lines.

Whatever may be said of Croatian men, the women cannot be accused of indolence. They not only perform all the duties of the house, dairy, and garden, but even feed the cattle and horses and clean the harness. They also undertake the heaviest part of the field labour and vintage gathering, and do the buying and selling at the fairs. It is amusing, if irritating, to watch the men of a household start on an expedition townwards. They never stir till the women have laced their sandals on their lordly feet, buttoned up their sheepskins, filled their "*torbas*" with necessaries and dainties, and, lastly, placed the whips in their hands, which is the signal that the carts and horses, already harnessed by the women, are ready.

These duties are only some of the feminine occupations. The women provide all the clothing for the household, including the wonderfully beautiful embroideries. They shear the sheep, dress, spin, dye, and weave the wool or hemp; they sow and gather the flax, steep, dry, spin, weave, and bleach the linen. A weaving loom is in every house, and at this the women are continually employed during the winter months when the weather stops outdoor labour. As the "*torba*" with its cards and dice contains never-failing occupation for the men, so the distaff affords endless employment to the women. Wherever they go they carry it with them in their girdles, ready whenever an idle moment presents itself to turn the spindle and drag out the thread.

All Slavs love beauty for its own sake, and one of the things which strike a stranger most forcibly is the artistic appearance of Croat homes. Even their earthenware pots, their wooden chairs, and agricultural implements are beautiful. The dyes they employ are of extraordinary brilliancy and softness, and are extracted from saffron, willow bark, and the wild pear tree. Their embroideries are worked in characteristic geometrical designs without a frame, and follow, according to the experts who have but lately begun to realize the artistic value of Southern Slav needlework, the Byzantine and Holbein techniques. Their

coarse linen and fine cambrics are prepared according to the same process as ancient stuffs discovered in Egyptian tombs. Not only their ornaments, but their knives and spinning-wheels, their furniture, rifles, carts, and tools are all skilfully carved and painted. Even the poorest peasant is an instinctive artist. The gorgeous East has touched the land, and at a fair or fête the crowd appears like a rich and varied symphony in colour.

As with colour so with music. Advocates of Croatian nationality assert that the world has been made familiar with Croatian music under the name of Hungarian; that many of the so-called Hungarian melodies and folk songs are Slavonic-Croatian in origin, and have merely been altered and adapted by Magyar hands; that the Magyars deprive Croatia of more than national freedom and money; they deprive her of artistic reputation; that the Budapest Croatian embroidery, jewellery, carving and pottery are sold as Hungarian. Even Brahms and Liszt helped themselves freely from the Southern Slavonic music, and Lehar, with whose talent Vienna, New York, and London are so familiar, has founded one of his best works—"*Der Rasttelbinder*"—on Southern Slavonic airs. The gipsies of Hungary, popularly regarded as the guardians of Magyar music, have probably most largely plundered from the Croatian folk melodies and dances.*

Pure Croatian music has a character entirely its own, full of originality and subtle charm. It is scarcely ever heard in its original purity and perfection beyond the frontier of its native country. Indeed it is heard to the best advantage in the most out-of-the-way villages, in farmhouses, at fairs and at rural fêtes. During the long winter evenings the inmates of adjoining farmhouses gather together after supper, sometimes in one house, sometimes in another. The men sit on one side of the room, the women on the other occupying themselves with some kind of needlework or carving. The buzz of conversation is stilled every now and then when one of the company breaks into song. Such songs! Wild, passionate, softly plaintive, breathing distress and melancholy for the past and present national troubles of Croatia and the Slav race, pulsating with feverish and deep sentiments—with misty aspirations and hopes for the future. It is easy to imagine the fervour awakened in impulsive Croat hearts by these exquisite folk songs, which invariably point to

* A talented Magyar friend of mine vigorously repudiates the assertion made above. "Slav music," she writes, "and Magyar music are so entirely different in character that neither nation could possibly steal the other's. Our national music has been our own since the beginning of our history—some of the most beautiful of our songs date from the Rakóczy insurrection, and are filled with the spirit of that wonderful time."

the day when the brave, long-suffering Slavs will rise and free themselves from tyranny and oppression, whether the oppression be Austrian, Magyar, or Turkish. Every note of Croatian music echoes the wail of a long downtrodden race, recounts ancient glories, and sings of the coming of a splendid day which will dawn either under the banner of Austria-Hungary or under that of a federation of Southern Slav states outside the Empire. They have two objects upon which they lavish all their love and devotion. One is the Christ; the other is their nation. Towards the patient carved Figure on the rough cross which dominates every poor hearth they look for sympathy in life and support in death, and towards the red, white and blue ensign—the Croatian colours—hanging beneath the crucifix they gaze in ever-growing determination to secure national liberty.

The superiority of the music of these Southern Slavs even over that of Russia lies in the fact that they are a people who are more than equal to the Russians and Poles in susceptibility to poetic sentiment, and their songs and dances possess therefore a strange and entrancing note of melancholy. Croat dances and songs are nearly always in the minor key. They are unquestionably original. Croats prefer to improvise both music and words as they sing. Only the ancient national melodies do they leave unchanged, and these may be called the ritual songs which have been handed down by oral tradition through centuries. The most celebrated of these is perhaps the one which they chant on St. John's Night, when the peasants leap through the fires on the hill-tops and call upon the heathen goddess "Lado." The national hymn of Croatia—"*Liepa nasa domovina*"—is modern and was composed by a young Croatian officer—Josip Runjanin. Drinking songs are most curious and beautiful. Like those of the Serbs they are grave, even prayerful, and some of them have actually been appropriated by other nationalities to reappear as hymns! For example, Haydn was a Croatian and his famous German song "*Gott erhalte*," the Austrian national anthem, known in England as the tune of "Glorious things of thee are spoken," a drinking song sung by the Slavs round about Bistritz.

When the present ever-growing Illyrian movement took life, a school of Croatian music was founded at Zágréb under the direction of the most famous national musicians, and in 1846 the modern world suddenly awakened to a realization of the beauty of Vatroslar Lisinski's Croatian opera "*Ljubovizlova*." Before his advent Croatian composers had unpatriotically sunk their nationality in that of more powerful nations; but Lisinski won fame honestly and proudly as a Croat.

There is considerable difficulty about transmitting this Slav

music to paper exactly as it is sung or played; for it is based generally on ancient modes, and the intervals cannot easily be modified by the truly musical ear; while again it possesses notes which it is impossible to reproduce in our notation. Consequently, without an intimate knowledge of the ancient modes, Croat-Slavonic melodies cannot be harmonized. But any one who, in this age of searching after novelties and beauty, sets himself or herself to the task of mastering this difficulty, and to collecting and publishing these beautiful Croatian songs and dances, will earn the praise and gratitude of all true lovers of music and poetry.

Though warm-hearted and passionate, the Croats seldom marry for love. Love is one thing, marriage another, and the one does not interfere with the other. There is no strict standard of morality in Croatia. "Croats love like birds, like the innocent animals." To have lovers, or to have none, is entirely a question of individual temperament, of individual attraction, whether before or after marriage. Lovers occasionally, but rarely, marry; and married people seldom take the trouble to investigate one another's *affaires de cœur*. Divorce is easily obtained, but it is easier still to avoid all expense and unpleasantness by refraining from awkward inquiries. Marriage is a business arrangement built on the solid foundations of partnership and cash. Marriageable maidens are termed "saleable daughters," and eligible bachelors "purchasing young men"; the highest bidder secures the girl.

On a day previous to the betrothal the bridegroom and his best man call at the door of the bride's home and inform the inmates that they are seeking a beautiful star to guide them through the night. Whereupon the bride who is not far away runs to her room and her intended bridegroom exclaims—"Why, there is the star we seek!" Then he offers flowers to the family and the bride returns to be asked by her parents whether she is willing to accept her suitor. Of course she replies in the affirmative.

During the interval between this private ceremony and the public betrothal it is customary in many districts of Croatia for the two affianced persons, if they should meet in public, to fly from each other as if from the plague. They dare not meet one another's gaze, or ill luck will surely follow the marriage. On the betrothal day the bridegroom's "*Gospodar*" sends the girl an apple filled with gold and silver coins as a contribution to her "dot." He also presents each female member of her family with a gift of wearing apparel which, needless to say, entails a considerable tax on his resources.

On the wedding day the bridal procession proceeds to church early in the morning headed by a sort of fool or clown clad half in female, half in male dress, with a goose wing stuck in his hat. This post is always filled by the wittiest and merriest individual of the community. After him comes the bride dressed all in dazzling white linen, over which she wears a coquettish blue and silver embroidered zouave laden with big silver buttons. Her hair floats loosely down and is entwined with flowers and silver tinsel. On her head is a very lofty crown of imitation red and pink roses spangled over with silver tinsel, and hung all round with long streamers of red roses, silver beads, and ribbons. If she belongs to the Roman faith she carries a rosary ; if a member of the Greek Church she holds a bouquet. (The majority of Croatians proper belong to the Roman Church, while Serbo-Croats belong to the Greek Church.) The bride's neck is loaded with beads and often with her dowry in golden pieces. Behind her walk her girl friends looking like bright red and white posies, arm linked in arm, their short white skirts swaying and rustling proudly. Then comes the bridegroom on horseback, dressed also in white linen, with red, blue and white ribbons dangling from his hat. Over his white garments he wears a crimson zouave, which he has put on for the first time at the door of the bride's house.

Every district in Croatia has its own particular wedding customs, but nearly all of them include the bride race and the ceremony of "putting the cap on" the bride. Before the wedding feast begins the bride starts out to run from one given point to another, and the bridegroom and his best man make after her in pursuit. If the bridegroom catches her first the best man has to stand the expense of all wine drunk at the wedding feast ; if the latter is successful, the bridegroom has to do all the paying. The "capping," or hair binding ceremony, takes place at midnight, when the assembled matrons accompany the bride to her room, remove her crown, pin up her flowing hair, and put on her the kerchief worn after the fashion usual for married women. Then a young cock is caught and decapitated outside the bride's window, after which the bridegroom is summoned and given full possession of his new wife.

Wedding festivities are kept up sometimes for three or four days. During this time guests do not think of going to bed. Should strangers chance to call during the festivities, the bride herself makes them welcome and presents them with the loving cup—a gigantic vessel filled with Croatian wine—after tasting of which the visitors are invited to take seats at the table, when they are again expected to drink the health of the bride and

bridegroom in a glass of the famous old native wine celebrated from time immemorial for its delicious flavour and sweetness. This is made from the vines introduced into the country by the Roman emperor Probus in the third century, and planted by his followers in the district around Mitrovits.

At the end of the third or fourth day the company departs homewards, rolling, laughing, singing, apparently not a whit the worse for their prolonged merry-making, and never ill-humoured. The Croats seem able to imbibe any quantity of alcohol without injurious consequences, and they rarely quarrel when out for enjoyment. One seldom sees a Croatian in a dangerous and nasty temper except when politics are under discussion, when even the most amiable become bellicose. In this they differ from their brothers, the pure-blooded Serbians, who go out of their way to pick quarrels.

Baptisms, deaths, and religious fêtes are all celebrated with somewhat exhausting vigour in Croatia. Holidays seem to occur every few days. A quaint and rather beautiful custom is observed in some districts on Easter Monday, when the cemeteries are visited by the entire community *en masse*. The priests march out in full canonicals surrounded by their little red-frocked acolytes and offer prayers for the souls of the departed. When the service is ended they go in procession round the graves, sprinkling holy water on each as they pass, and the people follow bearing lighted candles, bunches of spring flowers, and other pathetic little souvenirs. A widowed mother brings a lock of her child's hair to lay on its father's grave, or a girl carries a piece of new ribbon to place on the grass above her dead companion. Oranges and apples, letters and little religious books are placed upon the graves. Relatives kneeling on the ground whisper to the dead all that has occurred during the year; even the most trivial gossip is murmured with sobs and tears through the six feet of clay.

On every side one overhears plaintive appeals—"Oh! why did you leave us so soon, Beloved? We need you, little *Jagoda*.* Your clothes are still beautiful and good and would have endured yet many years. Darling, your bed is still warm, your cup still has milk in it; why did you depart?"

At sunset the mourners dry their tears with the philosophy and faith of true Slavs, call good-night to their departed ones, and troop homeward to end the day and forget their pain, as Slavs have learnt to do through the long sad centuries of their history in dancing and song. Had these people in bygone

* Strawberry, a pet name in Croatia.

ages been gifted with less plastic natures there would have been but few brave patriots to-day to fight the battle of the oppressed Slavonic race throughout Europe.

When Croats meet on the streets they greet one another with the salutation, "Jesus Christ is alive and reigns!" To which the person addressed replies, "Yes, He lives and reigns for ever and ever." A lady is met with the words, "I kiss your hand, honourable lady." In the case of a married woman the assurance is literally carried out; in the case of a girl the formula is only figurative. Pagan traditions still survive. Sometimes at dinner the master of the household offers a libation of wine "to the other gods." Again, when a person dies the members of the family knock three times on each wall to let the household gods know that some one has departed, and then make a great noise in order to prevent the spirit haunting the house. The dead are always dressed up in fine clothes, and old women toil for hours daily embroidering winding sheets for themselves, which are in most cases veritable works of art. Another quaint custom may be noted—the practice of betrothed young men seeking out their promised brides and deluging them with either buckets of cold water or perfume squirts till induced to desist by a present of coloured eggs.

Beggars are much respected everywhere, and as there is no poor law, begging is systematized. The beggars form a community in themselves. In each village or district they elect a king or queen whose duty it is to assign "beats" to their fellows, to receive and distribute moneys collected, and to smooth over bickerings. The beggars have each certain houses to call at where they receive a fixed sum, generally a couple of kreutzers, which is given "in the name of Jesus Christ the King." There are special beggars who stand at church doors. There are others who come out only on fête and saints' days; others again levy a contribution on their richer neighbours who happen to possess the same name. An idiot is entitled to beg both day and night everywhere.

World ignorance has been the instrument which has enabled Austria-Hungary to hinder Slavonic progress within the Dual Monarchy. But this instrument has broken in the hands of politicians and ecclesiastics. Forced emigration has brought enlightenment. Croats and Dalmatians have for years been steadily leaving their homeland to seek employment and liberty in foreign countries. Many of them become sailors, and especially are they fond of sailing under the British flag. In many of the coast villages and not a few of the inland towns a large proportion of inhabitants speak English almost as well as they do their

native tongue. Indeed, in some of the inland towns English is a language generally spoken, the inhabitants having emigrated to America, Canada, New Zealand, or Australia a generation previously, and there brought up their children according to British ideas. Those ideas are now preached by the peasants who have returned to spend the evening of their lives in Croatia and Dalmatia, and to send out the war-cry of "Freedom for the Slavs" to their fellow-country people.

The autonomy of Croatia-Slavonia is all but nominal. The "Ban" (or Viceroy) has become merely the nominee of the Magyar Premier, and is to-day rather the representative of Budapest than of Zágréb. His powers are worthless in the event of any dispute between Croatia and Hungary. Very often he is a Magyar. Croatia asks for no doles from Austria-Hungary, nor any help, but merely adequate redress for the evils done to her in the past, and security and freedom for the future. The best patriots in Croatia have not hitherto set their faces against an understanding with Hungary. Their demand is "that Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, as a nation, should have the right to decide freely and independently concerning its existence and fate, and that it is justified in making every effort to uphold its national independence." On this foundation they contend that the two peoples, Magyars and Slavs, can found an enduring friendship.

The recent Balkan Wars showed how the pulse of the Slavs was beating. The Slavs of the Monarchy realized that their kindred across the frontier were fighting a splendid battle for freedom. The call of the blood was strong. "Slavs—one and united" became the watchword. The long smouldering enmity against Austria burst into flame. A wave of racial recognition went out to Russia. Too late the statesmen of Austria and of Hungary have realized that Napoleon was a prophet as well as a soldier. He it was who first comprehended the Slavs of the South. His brief control of these ill-treated lands was the brightest and happiest period they have known. The roads he built and the schools he opened made the Croats and Dalmatians his eternal debtors. He foresaw that if the Southern Slavs were to remain linked with Austria it was necessary to establish a Slavonic kingdom under the Hapsburg Crown. Whether that solution of the Southern Slav question is still possible, the conclusion of the present war will tell.

CHAPTER XII

BELGRADE: THE GATEWAY TO THE EAST

Few cities in the world have seen more wars or stood more sieges than Belgrade—"the Home of Wars for Faith" the Turks called it.

Standing above the meeting of the great rivers, the Save and the Danube, the White City is the key to Hungary, and the gateway to Serbia. Founded two thousand two hundred years ago, it has been under many masters, come through great vicissitudes, and has but rarely known peace. The present war of the world has once again brought it into notice and interested the peoples of the West in this the first City of the East.

I would here tell of it as it was just before the war came, and describe its people and its life when the storm clouds were gathering.

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The Citadel, once a famous fortress—the White Castle—now only a prison and a barracks, stands overlooking the great blue lake made by the junction of the rivers. Behind it is the town itself, a city of white houses and few churches, with the gardens of Kalemegdan from where may be seen the famous view over the rivers below.

The centre of interest in the city is the Teratsia, Belgrade's most beautiful boulevard, into which converge numberless precipitous streets bustling with life. Here in the market-place rows of stalls and booths, filled with all kinds of merchandise, and piled high with vegetables, amongst which paprika seems to be predominant with its green pods, dried pods, red pods—as red as fire. Other stalls are heaped with weird cheeses, sausages, scarlet-hued sides of bacon, eggs, butter, honey, and strange looking white breads, baked in the shape of crosses, horses, pigs, houses and crowns, all sprinkled over with pink sugar, and grey poppy seeds. Somewhat further on are booths, round which are stacked up tiers upon tiers of earthenware, brightly coloured pots and pitchers, big bundles of sheepskin coats, and disagreeably

uncured skins of every sort, round which myriads of flies are buzzing. There are also rolls of home-woven linen, horsehair fringed aprons, brass-studded peasant belts, gaudy kerchiefs, jewellery, filigree silver work, lovely embroideries, gorgeous carpets from Pirot, ribbons, farming implements, ikons, holy pictures, cowhide sandals, and long wooden stands bearing rows upon rows of round sheepskin caps, looking like so many decapitated heads.

Business is very brisk, for hundreds of country folk have come into the town to see what can be seen, to say their prayers, lay in stores, listen to the music which will play all the afternoon on the Kalemegdan, and a gay crowd it is! Serbia, like Hungary, can show a great variety of national costumes, all different, all picturesque and all brilliant. Each district has its own dress, its special customs, and though the residents in Belgrade have, more or less, adopted the fashions of Vienna and Paris—or tried to—the peasants, happily, still cling to their old world costumes. Under the shade of the lime trees, through which the sunlight flickers on the dazzling, uneven white cobbles, the holiday makers stroll to and fro. Here are huge, loose-limbed fellows, clad in baggy white or blue breeches, stiffly embroidered attila jackets and sheepskins, their waists supported by heavy brass and silver-mounted leather belts, in which they carry a veritable arsenal of weapons. Their legs are swathed in linen or woollen bandages, their feet are shod in broad sandals of untanned hide, bound to the ankles with scarlet braid. They move like panthers, silently, swiftly, lithely. From their sun-scorched, thin, high cheek-boned faces downwards there is not an ounce of superfluous flesh. They are mountaineers and represent Serbia's finest manhood. Oddly different are they in face and figure to their womenkind, who, in this district, are inclined to stoutness, but who make up for a certain squatness of figure by the grace with which they wear their straight-cut linen robes—chemises, rather—over which are crimson, or blue velvet zouaves, stitched with silver, and their dark shining hair is glossy and beautiful, coiled and folded as it is round the cheeky little red fezzes, perched coquettishly at the back of their well-set heads. Some of the costumes are, however, not so classic as these, and the girls from some of the villages contrive to render themselves grotesque by adding to their already ample proportions a number of gathered petticoats.

Serbia is, taken as a whole, a poor, a very poor land, and it puzzles one to learn that some of these gala dresses cost about forty of our English pounds. But then, a Balkan woman perhaps buys only a single dress in her lifetime, so it might well be splendid.

There are foreigners too, hailing from the other Balkan

States and Hungary. At one stall may be noticed a group of decidedly insolent looking Magyar Alfölders. They have come across the river from the Danube Valley. Great, dark-visaged fellows, they are plainly horsemen, judging by their walk. Their dress is a full white cotton skirt reaching half way below the knee, a blue or red, silver-buttoned jacket, sheepskin overmantle, high black boots, and a small black felt hat, surmounted by a gay flower and hung with coloured ribbon streamers. They crack their tremendously long whips, converse at the top of their raucous Magyar voices, and glance about with an expression of utmost scorn at the "swine-dogs"—the Serbs—for whom, together with all Slavs, they cherish an inveterate scorn and dislike; a dislike which the "Swine-dogs," not unnaturally, cordially reciprocate. Then there are Dalmatian women in floating draperies and veils, and Jews, not so dirty as their brethren elsewhere, who speak the soft, musical Spanish *patois* peculiar to the Hebrews in this part of Europe. And there are Bosnians, too, in their abbreviated white kilts, fur-edged, silver embroidered zouaves, tulip-hued turbans, and beautiful silken sashes, wound, not only round their stomachs, but also round three or four silver-embossed big swords, which, supported by the sash, cause the wearers' waists to protrude several inches on each side. Gentle mannered Croats, men in long, flapping, white linen trousers, loose linen jackets, and wide-brimmed felt hats, the women in short yellow, or white, kilted petticoats, black jackets, and white kerchiefs, rub shoulders with rough-tongued, heavy-featured Bulgarians, of both sexes, the women attired in garish smock-like garments, with sequins and ribbons in their coarse black hair; the men in homespun and sandals, with the characteristic *Kulpak*—a lofty erection of sheepskin—as headgear. Some girls from Herzegovina are trying to drive a bargain with a dealer in painted and stitched sheepskin jackets. Pretty they are, and their national costume—a short cotton smock and trousers with a bright scarf round the waist—rivals in picturesqueness, if not in extravagance, that of their Albanian sisters. A couple of these latter stand gazing about in a vacant sort of manner, barbaric to look at in their large purple velvet aprons fringed with gold, their thick red gaiters, deep, stiff, and be-jewelled belts of silver, ear-rings, seven inches in length, kerchiefs of orange silk, and flowing hair. The only really highbred and beautiful women in the throng are some Montenegrins dressed in snowy white, with long, sleeveless, sky-blue coats over dainty, rose-tinted jackets, with cobwebby lace veils floating from their sleek black heads, making a misty background for their sparkling dark eyes. They appear to have but a poor

opinion of an ugly Turkish couple—a yellow-complexioned, hook-nosed man in a magenta turban and slovenly red breeches, and his wife, a mere bundle of thick black cloth and white muslin head wrappings. With the exception of the Magyars all belong to nations of Slavonic, or partly Slavonic, origin.

As one watches, the crowd thins, for it is now past eleven o'clock, and getting on to dinner hour. Stall keepers are packing up their wares, preparatory to going home. Along one side of the market-place little *cafés* and restaurants are making tremendous and noisy preparation to feed the poorer multitude at rickety tables placed along the street kerbs. Balkan menus are curious, and the odour of most of the dishes is enough for an Occidental. Indescribably loathsome beggars—gipsies chiefly, for the Serb rarely begs—are swarming towards the eating houses, having already done an excellent morning's business at the church doors by the exhibition of their sores and horrible deformities. They are now intent upon extracting all they can out of the diners, certain that if they persist long enough they will be bribed to move off out of sight.

All at once there is a stir amongst the jostling crowd. A sudden burst of music proclaims the coming of an infantry regiment. They are playing a Slavonic folk song, wild, strange, of course in a minor key, yet somehow full of a defiant and cheerful spirit. Then comes a quick march, played fortissimo, as band and soldiers swing into view. They are not much to look at in their dusty, patched, blue-grey breeches and high caps, loose cotton shirts, and down-at-heel boots, but in their young, eager faces, in the flash of their eyes, in their merry laughter, they give one a glimpse of that unconquerable national spirit which lived so long ago in their hero, Milosh, which rings in the ancient teaching of their Arnaouts of Ipek: "Fear God a little, and, as for your enemies, do not know that they live."

Has any one ever described Belgrade as unlovely? If so it cannot have been seen on a spring day when the chestnut, walnut, lime, fig, acacia, and lilac trees are in leaf and flower along the dazzling, ill-paved boulevards, when the sunshine glitters on the golden domes of the new palace, when every garden —there is a garden to even the poorest little villa—and all the well-tended parks are radiant with blossoms, when the air blows up from the river sweet and fresh.

From noon onward, the scene on the Teratsia increases more and more in vivacity. The sidewalks are crowded, especially on a holiday, with such varied and strange throngs of so many different nationalities and types, that it would require an experienced ethnologist to describe them.

One characteristic of Belgrade will assuredly stamp itself on the observation and memory of every visitor—the number of its coffee houses and restaurants. There seems to be one *café*, or, as the Serbs say, one *kafana* to every two other buildings. It is a subject which never fails to surprise casual tourists, how these establishments manage, not merely to keep going but, to be always overcrowded. Yet those intimate with the city know well that its inhabitants prefer living anywhere except in their homes; a fact due partly to the exceedingly limited accommodation of Belgrade houses, where there is, as a rule, scarcely space to move; and also to the inveterate national love of the citizens for publicly discussing everything from politics to the weather. For example, no one who understands the customs of the Serbian capital would think of addressing a letter to a man's house. Were an immediate reply required, the various *kafanas* that he frequents and the order in which he visits them should be ascertained, and, as the Serb is conservative in his habits and rarely alters his routine of life, a letter addressed to wherever he is accustomed to go at the hour is sure to find him.

Like all proud, independent peoples, the Serbs have a rooted objection to domestic service, and the work of the house must consequently be done by the women of the family. Not a single one of these prosperously attired "Society" women, the wives and daughters of well-to-do citizens, who are strolling along the Teratsia, but has scrubbed out her own flat or villa, made the beds and boiled the early coffee for the household. Doubtless the dearth of servants is also an explanation of the fondness for restaurant meals.

King Milan entitled his capital "*Petit Paris*," and with reason. For not only do its citizens possess something of the Parisian's talent of taking life and its business easily and pleasantly, but also the town itself, with its streets and parks, its fine municipal theatre and two or three play-houses, its small, but lively, music-halls, and many *cafés*, is characterized by a gaiety and brilliancy reminiscent of the French capital.

Belgrade, to the Serbs, who live on the borders of civilization, is *the* great metropolis of Europe, and the Teratsia is *the* most magnificent boulevard ever made. The really excellent hotels on this Teratsia, with their "lifts" and "hot and cold water laid on" and "English sanitation," the fussy electric cars which dart up and down the hilly streets, the electric street lighting, the neat fiacres which rattle over the still far from good pavements, the antediluvian top hats and weird "sport" and "English High Life," advertised garments displayed in the windows of the

tailors' shops, all these "modernities" cause the hearts of the progressive Belgrade citizens to swell with conscious pride. There is something very pathetic in this ardent desire to be considered on a civilized equality with the nations whom civilization has robbed of so much of the vitality and simple-mindedness which are the very qualities by which Serbia has gained her victories against fearful odds.

The big eating-houses on the Teratsia are crammed both inside and outside with diners, and their atmosphere is dense with cigarette smoke and the hot fumes of strange national dishes, as a rule, judiciously varied by the dishes of other lands. It would require a sturdy stomach to stand a bowl of "*chorba*"—the favourite broth of the country, and who—save a Serb—has teeth perfect enough to discuss a Belgrade "*chubastje*," a steak served floating in grease and onions? "*Tri puta pomozhe Bog*" runs the Serbian formula, when a host presses his food upon a visitor, but, to most strangers, Serbian dishes are a trial, except, perhaps, the national *hors d'œuvre* called "*Kaimak*," a decoction made up of cheese, onions, garlic and green chopped paprika pods with oil and vinegar added.

Though a decidedly hospitable and gregarious people, the Serbs seldom entertain one another to meals, except on the day of their "*Slava*" when every Serb's home is thrown open from morning till midnight for all to come and partake of the good things provided. Dinner and supper parties are few and far between, even the frugal feasts which here stand for dinner parties, the argument being that such costly entertainments are unnecessary to the enjoyment of life. An invitation to pass a few hours listening to a military or gipsy band, sipping thin, native wine, or a few tiny glasses of *Slivovitza* or *Komovista*—liqueurs dear to all Southern Slavs—to smoke a cigar, play a game of chess, cards, or dice, for trifling stakes, and to exchange some good jokes or bits of gossip; that is the acme of dissipation in which the ordinary Serb invites his neighbour to participate. Story-telling is one of their chief delights, and through the long hours of the afternoon small knots of eager listeners can be observed gathered round the peasant narrators of Serbian tales—"*guslars*" as they are called. Indeed, long after sundown, until the soldier police begin to prowl about in their long overcoats, with long swords, and longer rifles with fixed bayonets, these little groups of tellers and hearers still cluster together, living again the glorious days of last year's victories over their ancient enemy, fighting again and again that old battle of "fair St. Vitus' Day," in which, five hundred years ago, in spite of all their forefathers' gallantry, "Kossovo became a pasturage

for Turkish cavalry." * It is through their story-tellers that the Serbs have kept alive the primitive ideals of their ancestors whose principles of morality have been handed down by word of mouth, in story, poetry and song, adorned with images and shades of pastoral and agricultural life and fierce warfare. Passionate and melodious are Serbia's tribal song-music and dancing; wild and untamed, but, above all, melancholy—grief-stricken—"like the wailing of orphan children," as some one who knew them well has said—who even in their feasts seem not to forget that they revel on the tombs of their slaughtered forefathers. And yet it is simple: born of a people who live on the produce of the soil, on their flocks and herds; who disdain commercial traffic as sordid; who are poor, and yet rich in kindness and warm in hospitality; who look with bitter hatred on tyrants and are stubborn to resist any law imposed on them except their ancient usages and customs, and whose chief characteristics are family affection and honour, respect for the aged, an almost fanatical love of their fatherland, and an extraordinary valour in defending their country and its liberties.

Two o'clock has sounded, and the *cafés* are disgorging their occupants. The streets are again thronged, and the trams are loaded with passengers bound for the various pleasure gardens which surround the city. Two miles out in the suburbs lies the Topchider Park, a lovely place of forest, green turf, and bubbling streams, and herein stands the ancient residence of Milosh, the founder of the Obrenovitch dynasty. Follow the trippers who are going there, for it is a place well worth a visit. The fact that it is a locality haunted by dark and bloodstained memories does not detract from its popularity, though strangers may perhaps shudder when wandering over the flower-gemmed greensward under its oak and elm groves, to read on a monument erected to mark the spot that here Prince Michael Obrenovitch, the wise, was murdered in 1868, and here, too, the unfortunate Alexander and Draga took their last walk together never dreaming of what awaited them in the old white-washed "*konak*" on the city beyond.

Some of Belgrade's finest restaurants are situated in the Topchider Park, and in the summer months, if one would visit them, tables must be reserved days beforehand. But *tout passe, tout lasse*—even sad recollections—and this afternoon nothing could be more cheerful than the mood engendered by the bright

* The Battle of Kossovo in the year 1389 made a very deep impression on the mind of the Serbs. In it the flower of their nobility fell and their Tsar and Murad the Sultan of the Turks were both killed and Serbia lost her independence.

scene in this playground. The air is clear and light, despite the fierce sunshine, flowers bloom everywhere, the trees rustle in the soft breeze, and over there in the centre of a level clearing, a gipsy band of some ten or twelve musicians are playing a "*horo*" on fiddles, hammer zithers, big guitars, *violas da gamba* and pipes; played, as are all Serbian "*horos*," in the minor key. Dirty, ragged and disreputable-looking, red-brown of complexion, black-haired, with peculiar lustrous black-green eyes—the Balkan gipsies are nevertheless a power to reckon with, for, merely by the influence of their marvellous music, they hold sway over the mercurial, emotional, Slavonic peoples amongst whom they dwell. A circle of dancers presently forms round this band, revolving slowly at first, while the circle widens as more and more couples join in. It soon numbers fifty or sixty dancers, and an inner circle is then made, which moves in an opposite direction to the outer circle until, at a signal given by the gipsy-leader striking a wild discord, the two circles intermingle, men and women alternating, while their feet describe swift and difficult movements in time to the wailing, anguished melody. In and out, twisting and turning all the time, singing softly as they move, these dancers, in their brilliant costumes, resemble so many gigantic and many-coloured flowers blown here and there over the grass. All through the afternoon they continue to dance to the unearthly devilish gipsy music, and all afternoon, at the opposite end of the park, a military band assists digestion at the smart bustling *cafés*, which, like the would-be ultra modern crowds that frequent them, strive to imitate the *cafés* of Paris and Vienna, doing their best to grow wise, and dull, prosaic and ugly; and, in fact, everything that the *cafés* of a civilization-surfeited Paris and a bored, tired Vienna are striving and labouring to get away from.

In every capital city there is some corner, some spot where it gathers and concentrates itself, as it were, where it shows all its special characteristics. This corner in Belgrade is the Kalemegdan. Belgrade, "the white fortress," stands on a most splendid natural site. From a point of vantage on a lofty cliff it overlooks the junction of the Save and Danube; when the latter, flowing eastwards towards the ravines of Basiasch from out the infinite misty Hungarian plains, meets the Slavonian river as it sweeps in from the West, and the two mighty floods spread out beneath the salt-white city into a calm, wide lake before passing onward, in a tremendous tide, towards Orsova, through the Iron Gates and out into the Black Sea. Such is the panorama unfolded before the gaze of those who find their way by train or on foot up the steep, dusty, boulevard to the Kalemegdan. Here on the crest of the hill stands the only important relics of ancient

Belgrade, the Cathedral and the Citadel. For since being emancipated, since a scandalized Europe at last intervened, and Serbia's Turkish tormentors were finally driven back behind the Balkans, the citizens have striven feverishly to do away with all signs of their former humiliation, their eager desire now being to justify the claim that their city should be regarded as a modern European capital. The abhorred Mohammedan quarter has been demolished, and has become the Jewish quarter, and all that can be now discovered reminiscent of the Ottoman occupation is a solitary and decaying mosque, a few old nooks and corners and desolate squares, where the occupants, chiefly degenerate Turks and Gipsies, congregate at the doors of low-eaved, vine-trellised houses. These wretched hovels are inhabited only by social outcasts, and lie along the river banks which form a junction of the Save and Danube, and along the by-ways on the hill, where, in the dreary pauper cemetery of St. Mark, cypress trees throw a kindly shadow on a bare wall, against which lean two wooden crosses bearing the names, scrawled in chalk, "Alexander Obrenovitch" and "Draga Obrenovitch."

The Cathedral, wherein sleep generations of long-forgotten Serbian Tsars, under crested monuments, now crumbling to dust, is not remarkably beautiful, and, for many reasons, it is around the grey, picturesque Citadel, on whose ramparts the Serbian tricolour flies, that sentiment and admiration concentrates. This poor old fortress represents Serbian patriotism in stone. The flowers that cling so lovingly about its battered bastions, the flowering shrubs which kiss its grim sides, blossom profusely and fragrantly. It took on a new lease of life lately, and the breaches in the walls were stopped and strengthened. These renovated fortifications—renovated at great national cost—together with the whispers overheard in Belgrade *cafés* were ominous of what was to come.

In the big restaurant, on the hill top, where, on the fatal evening of June 10th, 1903, the murderers of Alexander and Draga met for supper and consultation, a brisk business is being done. At the white-topped tables, under the flowery acacias, merry parties are discussing everything discussable—politics, scandals, "*Bocks*," coffee and *slivovitza*—though but little of this latter. Here, too, a band of "Tsiganes" are playing their souls away in dreamy sensual melody, their presence recalling to memory how the regicides, when supping at one of these very tables, previous to swooping down upon their prey in the "old Konak," ordered their predecessors to play the then popular tune, "Draga's March," while they themselves joined in the chorus. The music floats out across the Kalamegdan Gardens

through the ancient Turkish arch, still called "The Gate of Constantinople," and the liquid notes are answered by the liquid splash of the water in the age-worn Turkish fountains, whereon—were the Arabic inscriptions less obliterated by time—it might be possible to decipher some long forgotten Turkish legend.

But no music or laughter can banish the ghosts which start up out of the dark past and cast their shadows on this flower-encircled green-embowered fortress. There is a moaning sigh in the rustle of the limes, which make a chequered, flickering shade on the white glacis of the stronghold, where, throughout long ages, massacres and tortures, too horrible for description, have been perpetrated. Visions of battles and bloodshed, of Turkish atrocities, of impaled Christian corpses, seem, every now and again, to loom up like thunder-clouds across the sun's face. For this spot is Serbia's Calvary!

Far below sparkle the great rivers which in early spring overflow their banks and cover, like a vast grey sea, the immense plain. When the floods have subsided the country, which two months before was submerged, becomes luxuriant with life and colour. There seems to be no limit to the horizon. Over the far-stretching Hungarian plains silence broods and fitful shadows chase each other. Like gigantic blue and silver ribbons the two streams flow between marshy banks fringed with rank grass, vividly-green rushes, osiers and wild flowers. Patches of forest and English-looking hedgerows here and there break the monotony. As far as eye can reach the Danube, after passing the city, has both Serbia and Hungary for its shores, and the road, the Corniche of this part of Europe, built by Prince Salem, can be traced for over one hundred kilometres through the two countries. On the left, purple and silver-veiled, rises Mount Avala, so rich in Serbian fairy lore. In the nearer distance, cool, leafy avenues of poplar, beech, acacia and elm indicate the windings of the lanes and smaller roads leading to scattered villages.

Very serene and placid is this Serbian land, with its little white homesteads dotted over its undulating surface. Troops of brightly clad peasants are trudging homewards to their vine-covered cottages, singing happily as they go; the scarlet, blue and white of their garments making blotches of colour through the trees. Some caviar fishermen are seeing to their boats near the river's bank; far off a group of sheepskin-coated swineherds are watching a mighty herd of red-haired pigs—where is a Serbian landscape without red-haired pigs?—and the sight of these swineherds brings to memory the fact, that, no further back than 1804, a certain young swineherd—George Petrovitch—left his pigs on

these fields and rode forth to battle with the Turkish Sultan, and to found the present Royal House of Karageorgevitch.

Slumberous, golden, the atmosphere is so fragrant, so warm, so quiet that it is difficult to realize that here, for centuries, tribes and races have struggled for supremacy.

This was the spot which Mahomet II., the Conqueror of Constantinople, "the Silent Sultan," considered the key to conquest north of the Danube. "First Belgrade, then Rhodes," was his watchword. As the traveller stands on this cliff it is not difficult to recall and visualize the terrible attacks made by this mighty soldier in 1455–6; when, on these ramparts, the Serbs and Magyars, forgetting for the sake of their common Christianity, all racial animosity, offered such a splendid resistance to the soldiers of the Prophet. Down there to the south-east of the Hungarian plain lay the army of Mahomet. He had given strict injunctions to the Musselman captains and soldiers to seize the city at all costs, for then the road would be clear for his victorious hosts to push forward northwards into the heart of Christendom. It was therefore a vast and determined multitude of spearmen that confronted the White Fortress on that morning. Hunyades, the only Christian warrior fit to cope with the situation, was more than two hundred miles away when news was brought to him of the peril threatening the garrison of the Fortress. But down the river he swept unhesitatingly with his little fleet of flat-bottomed boats, carrying his Magyar and Serbian peasant army. As he came along, his force was augmented by wild, half-armed bands, hailing from the villages and towns of the plains, who kept pace alongside the boats upon the banks of the stream. On and on they came, gathering in numbers with every mile, and before them, in the bow of the foremost vessel of the fleet, went that very gallant and strange old Franciscan Monk, John Capistrano. Standing with his white locks and beard blowing in the breeze, beneath the great black and crimson banner of the Cross, he encouraged the peasant army onwards, calling: "Have courage, for the Christ Himself is at the right hand of our Captain!" Few more glorious episodes does history relate than this half-forgotten, little known battle for supremacy. Across the Danube, at the entrance to the city, near where those fishermen are to-day mending their nets, the Musselmans had placed a huge boom of boats. This Hunyades attacked vigorously with his fleet, at the same time that John Capistrano led the charge against the Turkish forces on shore. Backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards swayed the frenzied armies—"Jesus!"—"Allah!" "Jesus!"—"Allah!" The far-off echo of the war-cries seem to sound again, to come back across the silence of ages, bringing

remembrance of that bloody noonday, which resulted in the complete rout of Mahomet and the Crescent, and victory for John Hunyades, John Capistrano and the Cross.*

Yes—there are many memories of great deeds done, great hardships endured, great causes fought for, hovering round the White Fortress!

Up here on the heights imagination can take flight, and open a wider vista than is now visible. In the mind's eye it is easy to follow the course of the Danube between the high ravines, which open after Belgrade is passed, right down to Orsova, through the awesome defile of Kazan, where the angry waters foam and dash between cliffs towering to the clouds. In fancy it is possible to travel beyond the Isle of Roses, sung of by Turkish poets, away down with the ever-widening torrent, which, as it sweeps towards the East, gradually becomes tranquil, indolent, unadventurous as if the languorous and dreamy spirit of the Orient had succeeded in soothing and captivating its turbulent waters.

* See the "History of the Siege of Belgrade" as told in the *English Historical Review*, by R. Nisbet Bain, April, 1892, p. 253.

CHAPTER XIII

LIFE IN THE BALKANS: A SERBIAN CHRISTMAS

"They see His star in the East and come to worship Him."

It is Christmas Eve and the sun is sinking in fiery glory behind the towering, jagged, snow-crowned mountains encircling the little village of Ak-Palanka. Here, in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, the world, with all its clamour, seems very far off; except for the hill-torrents, and the noises common to village life, all nature is numbed to stillness. The winds, that during the later autumn months bellowed so furiously through the deep gorges and ravines, have worn themselves out. Not a breath sways the naked branches in the forests. Along the main street of the small town and across the ruined courtyard of its ancient Turkish fortress pathways have been trodden through the snow, but beyond in the valley the roads are almost lost to sight under the frozen whiteness. It is a typical Serbian Christmas.

Long, long ago, in Pagan times, before the simple folk of Ak-Palanka had ever heard of the coming of the *Boyitch*,* on this night was celebrated "The Feast of the Dead." "And He is not jealous, the Blessed Child," explains an old woman, "He is not angry that we still give the candles to the dead who wail for light on His birthnight." It was on this evening, which is now the *fête* night of the Infant Christ—the Little God—that the heathen forefathers of the Serbian Slavs believed Earth became blended with *Raj*, the abode of the dead. On this evening they fancied the spirits of the departed cried on the thresholds of the living for light to be brought to them, which, when given in the form of burning tapers set on the doorstep, made them content to lie down and sleep in peace for another twelve months.

* "The Little God," now the name given to the Child Christ, whose worship is, more or less, mixed with the former adoration of the ancient pagan God "Dabog," or "Daybog"—the Sun God—who, in old times, was represented by a wooden figure, with a silver head and golden moustaches.

In a village in the Balkans.

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Down in the valleys, up on the cold hillsides, on their thresholds, they think they hear to-day, as they thought they heard yesterday, the moaning of "The Unseen," even as they hear in the ringing of the Christmas Bells the voice of the Light of the World.

Despite the heavy snowfall, since daybreak the market-place of Ak-Palanka has been a scene of excitement and activity. Bullock-carts have been coming and going all day, and bony little overladen pack-ponies, along with melancholy, lowing herds of cattle, and droves of squealing, black-haired pigs. For the majority of the latter these squeals are their last, for roast pork is the dish indispensable to a Serbian Christmas dinner.* As it is the eve of their great Feast Day the peasants are all in gala dress, and here in Ak-Palanka, where time stands still, the national Serbian dress is retained in all its glory. In this obscure village on a *festa* day there is as much colour, originality, and gorgeousness as at a King's Coronation. The homely, white-washed, cobble-paved streets fairly gleam with embroideries and white linen, with gold, coin-decked *Kapas*, and brightly-painted sheep-hides. The rickety, wooden market-stalls are laden with many-tinted materials, lovely Oriental rugs, and glittering silver and brass work. Seen through the blood-red glow of the setting sun, against the white background of the snow, these dull streets and market squares are rich in splendid, sparkling contrasts. There is something extraordinarily virile and individual, too, about the people themselves. Perhaps this is the result of breathing pure, rarefied air, of toiling incessantly amidst magnificent scenery, on the soil from which they came, and of which every man owns a share.

Now, as the last rays of the sunset touch the crumbling Oriental gateway of the *Karal*, the grey walls of the barracks, and the *Konak*, the crowd begins to disperse, and straggling little processions commence to wander out into the country beyond. All are talking, in the loud, cheery tones characteristic of the Serbians, and shouting bits of news of the most intimate nature across the narrow streets. Many are singing, and through the fine, ice-cold air their voices carry far, one can hear them long after they have left the town, and are well on their way along the great South road.

In the centre of Ak-Palanka, in the *café* room of the principal inn (*Mehana*), the smoke-begrimed, whitewashed walls are adorned with green boughs, and at painted, wooden tables groups of sheepskin-wrapped peasants—swineherds, shepherds

* The pagan Slavs always sacrificed a pig to their Sun God—"Daybog."

and farmers, are imbibing black coffee and thin, exceedingly sour native wine. Every window is tightly closed, and the atmosphere reeks with the effluvium of humanity, partially cured hides, tobacco and garlic, which invades everything and every place hereabouts. The heat thrown out by the immense earthen stove is stupefying, but evidently not too hot for the three or four big fellows who have been roasting their bare, half-frozen feet before it, and are now rebinding them in the multitudinous woollen bandages, which, with cow-hide sandals, comprise the natural footgear. Outside—though wind there is none—the cold is intense. Since the sun slid down behind the horizon, the thermometer has fallen several degrees and belated wayfarers, who still wait to load their bullock-waggons, are beating their arms, blowing on their hands, and shuffling their *opankas* * vigorously. Through the biting evening air the breath of the oxen circles up in silvery clouds ; myriads of stars come out in the sky, and against its great purple, silver-spangled dome, the giant mountains lift their regal, spotless peaks.

There are no shops worthy the name here, where business has a habit of totally subsiding between market day and market day, where stagnation rules supreme from the moment the last trader, peasant and herd leave the streets on Friday evening—the market day—till the first peasant, trader and drove of live stock enter it, at cockcrow, the Friday following.

To be sure there are establishments that call themselves shops ; there is a German grocery, there is also a Bulgarian medicine store, which is little patronized,† and another German business speculation in the shape of a haberdashery, where things "Made in Germany," hideous to look at, are set out for sale. Near by is a little bazaar, where rare and many-hued Pirot carpets are heaped to the low roof in pleasing confusion.

In the windows of the white, square-doored houses wax tapers are being lighted—a sign that the great festival of the *Badgni Dan* (Christmas) has commenced.

Let us follow the last band of countryfolk home, as it leaves the door of the *Mehana*, and spend the feast of Christmas with them here, in the land of the mighty Dushan.

In this wild and mountainous country, with gorges rugged and gloomy, where torrents are wont to burst in flood over the stony, hardly tilled fields, those who follow the calling of shepherd or swineherd are the wealthiest and most prosperous of the

* The national shoe, somewhat similar to a sandal in shape.

† Serbs detest and suspect unknown and foreign medicines. They have indeed certain herbs which they use when ill, but Serbs are seldom ill for long. They have a saying—"A sick Serb is a dead Serb."

agricultural community. It is a farmer's family which brings up the rear in the long procession of peasants making their way out of the town. At the head of the band, which moves in single file along the beaten snow path, walks the *Gospodar* or *Starechina*. He is an old man, and white-haired, but not one of his five sons, or his six grandsons, who stride behind him, is taller or more erect. In their gigantic, long-fleeced sheepskins, their silver-embroidered vests, and wide, silver-studded leather belts, bristling with pistols and *yatagans*, in their white tunics and scarlet or fur head-dresses, through the transparent darkness they appear of almost heroic stature. Noiselessly, swiftly, their broad-swathed feet keep the narrow track, trodden between the deep snow banks. In the centre of the way the lumbersome family waggon groans and squeaks, as, with horned heads bent low, the oxen haul it through the heavy drifts. Following hard on the heels of their menfolk come the women. Only their bright eyes and a few inches of cheek and forehead can be seen between the enveloping folds of their head-cloths, but underneath their sheepskin jackets the silks, silver and tinsel of their embroideries and necklaces glimmer in the starlight. Unlike most of the troops which precede them, these people have their home comparatively near the village; their *Zadruga* lies about three or four kilometres from the outskirts of the town, up a by-way leading off the main road to Pirot. The *Starechina*, by name, Gengich Milosh, with his sons, of whom four are married, his daughters-in-law and their children bring the number of the household up to twenty-five persons, not counting the beasts which occupy a very important, familiar and honourable position in Serbian domestic life. The Gengich *Zadruga* is a poor one. Everything is possessed in common, and this everything consists of about eighteen *plougovas* * of land, a flock of sheep and goats, some good oxen, ponies, and a herd of pigs.† With regularity Gengich Milosh pays his taxes to the State; industriously do he and his people toil; wisely do they save, and very respectful are they of the holy Christian fasts and feasts. At his table there are few as welcome as the kindly old *pap*,‡ who, in long black tunic and high black cap, under which his scanty grey locks fall to his shoulders, may often be met riding his shaggy pony along the road between Ak-Palanka and the Gengich farmstead.

Gengich and his sons had cut the *Badgnak*—the Log of the

* A *plougova* measures something less than a hectare (2½ acres).

† Each family has its land and agricultural implements, protected by a kind of Homestead Law from seizure.

‡ Priest of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Little God—at daybreak. Before hewing it, they had stood in prayer with faces turned towards the East with heads uncovered.* Their family will certainly have the best of luck this coming year, so Milosh tells himself, for the *Badgnak* never fell more straightly to earth than to-day, when it came tumbling down on the snow without disturbing so much as a dead leaf on the branches of its forest companions.

Presently the oxen turn by instinct up the side road that winds between melancholy willow trees towards the Gengich farmhouse. This stands secure from wolves and robbers behind a palisade of wattles ten feet in height. It is a low, two-storied, whitewashed building, surrounded by a broad, wooden verandah, over which, in summer time, vine tressels cast a cooling shade. Eight green-shuttered windows command a view of the road, and at first sight no entrance door is to be seen.

But after passing through the gate in the palisade, which encloses the courtyard and outhouses, the main door can be perceived half-concealed beneath the overhanging beams of the balcony.† It is a typical Serbian dwelling of the old style, which was universal before foreigners had introduced innovations.

* The *Badgnak* corresponds to the Anglo-Saxon Yule Log. It is cut on the morning of Christmas Eve by the male members of the family. It must be taken from a straight, young oak tree, and never be touched by ungloved hands, for it is sacred. Before cutting it, the men of the household throw grain upon it, saying, "Good luck in the name of Christ." Now they turn towards the East and utter a short prayer. Then the log is hewn and the chips are kept to preserve milk, to charm bees and cure sick cattle. There will be bad luck should the *Badgnak* fall crookedly or touch, in its fall, any other trees. Should there be many twigs on the stem it signifies a fruitful year. In some districts three logs are cut, one for the Virgin, the other for St. Joseph, and the smallest for the Holy Child. When brought to the house it is placed against the eastern wall and left there till night, when, in full gala dress, the men of the family carry it in, while one of the sons, standing at the door, holding a pot of grain, sprinkles it with corn and oats. In some parts of the country it is decked with ribbons and berries. When it is laid on the hearth and set alight, one after the other the sons and grandsons throw on it honey, wine, corn, and salt, together with a piece of silver money. There can be no doubt that it was once the symbol of the Sun returning to earth after the winter's darkness, and the cakes baked by the Serbians in honour of the *Badgnak* are all dedicated to the lights in the heavens. No woman is permitted to touch it. Its ashes are kept as a preventive against sickness; its fire is believed to sanctify the house and all in it. Nowadays the *Badgnak* represents the Saviour and His Glory. The Christ has simply superseded the Sun as the God of these people, who are still half pagan in their adoration of nature and beauty.

† The larger *Zadrugas* generally possess two or three adjoining and smaller dwellings where the younger branches of the family live, though the common dining hall is always situated in the main building occupied by the *Starechina*.

The entrance under the balcony opens directly into the large common living-room, where all meals are eaten, and also, frequently cooked. Its furniture consists of a huge, roughly-carved, unstained table, carved wooden chairs, long forms, and a lofty wooden cupboard. On the once white, but now smoke-darkened walls, are three holy ikons, and under each of them a tiny red lamp is burning; and there is a great yawning fireplace, the chimney of which gives a view of the sky, as well as easy entrance to snow and rain. This fireplace occupies nearly the whole of one side of the room, and round its blackened interior, chunks of bacon and hams are being smoke-cured. To the right of the living-room is another, even larger, where all the married members of the household, from the *Starechina* and his wife down, sleep during winter, to profit by the warmth of the fire in the adjoining apartment. It is crammed with furniture, clothes and weapons, and contains, at least, three massive bedsteads, each having a couple of thick mattresses, linen sheets adorned with fine embroidery and lace, and, as quilt, a hand-woven rug, or carpet, of brilliant colouring. The walls are also draped with similar rugs, and dyed blue and red sheepskins are spread on the earthen floor. As in the living-room, so here, shelves and cupboards run all round the walls, and the capacious chests and cupboards are overflowing with shirts, richly embroidered vests, linen tunics, and family heirlooms.

The stables, cowhouses, barns, and the lofts of the upper storey afford accommodation to the unattached and younger inmates of the establishment, and there they make themselves as comfortable as circumstances will permit.

Such is the home of the Gengich family, who are by this time unyoking their oxen in the courtyard, while the *Starechina's* grey-haired wife, who has remained behind to look after the babies and keep up the fire, is bending to kiss the rough, labour-gnarled hand of her husband, with the old greeting: "May God assist thee," to which he gravely replies: "God assist thyself, good wife!"

Much remains to be done before they can rest and enjoy their *Badgni Dan.* First the beasts must be stalled, and given their Christmas present of an extra feed, and then the dead must be remembered. Each member of the family sets a candle on the verandah "to give light to those who walk in darkness." And after this has been done, it is time to make ready for the great ceremony of the evening. Hands are well scrubbed, soiled *opankas* are exchanged for clean ones, and every piece of movable furniture in the living-room is taken out to the barns. From many receptacles the women extract their prettiest necklaces and garments, which they don in honour of the Little God and His

Badgni Dan. Then a reverent silence descends on the company, while the *Starechina's* wife sets alight two tall tapers, places them on the threshold on either side of the open door, and taking her place amongst the other women in a semicircle—for the gentler sex is forbidden to touch things sacred—watches with bent head, while one of the men comes forward to the entrance with a bowl of grain, and old Milosh and his male relatives bring in the *Badgnak.* As the huge log is carried across the doorstep, the son who holds the bowl sprinkles it with the grain, shouting: "A good night and a happy *Badgni Dan!*" Soon the *Badgnak* is crackling on the hearth, where it is laid so that part of it protrudes into the room, and, as the flames leap up the chimney, Milosh chants the ancient greeting to the Little God, who was a peasant like himself, and makes the sign of the cross over the heads of his children. Then, turning, he embraces each child in front of the log, thus ensuring the kindly love of the sheep to their lambs, the cows to their calves, the hens to their chickens, the love and kindness of all created things for one another. "May Christ's perpetual Light shine upon us through ages eternal!" As he utters these words, he flings on the fire a piece of silver money, salt, corn and honey. He then moves to the far end of the room to set fire to the incense which his youngest grandson is holding up to him in a copper dish. "Is it the Devil thou wilt hunt from amongst us, little Gengich Nikola? If so thy task is a sore one, and it will take more than spices and child prayers to drive the *byess*, the *vlkodlaks*, the evil ones out of our home—our country!" *

The next instant he laughs like a boy, as, led by the eager little child carrying the sweet-scented, smoking spices, the women enter with big bundles of straw, which they spread on the floor, in the form of a cross, imitating, as they do so, the sounds of the various animals in the farmyard. For now supper time has come, and no pious Serb would partake of it to-night anywhere except on a straw-strewn floor. As their Little God fared, so they will fare, being, they argue, no better than their Master.

Out in the courtyard the sucking-pig is roasting above a roaring, leaping fire set within a circle of bricks; and as the flames shoot up into the sapphire sky they cast a hell-like glow on the faces and figures of the boys and girls who are twirling the spit, and lifting up their shrill voices in a weird, monotonous chant. After a while, all is in readiness, and as eight strikes from the

* The *byess* are demons, the *vlkodlaks* are evil spirits of wolves. The Turks and Austrians, since the late Balkan War, are frequently called by these names. The incense burned on Christmas Eve is supposed to drive away evil spirits from the feast of the Little God.

wooden clock on the shelf, Milosh and his sons go out on to the verandah and fire their pistols into the night, and at their signal the *Domatshitsa* * appears carrying a tall wax candle made of three coloured bees-wax tapers—one green, one blue, and one red—entwined together to form a single stem, but branching off at the top into three separate lights.†

This is the torch of the Holy Trinity, and as it is placed in the centre of the space cleared on the floor for supper, the chief woman lays at one side of it an earthen bowl filled with hot embers from the *Badgnak*, and at the other side the three principal *Badgni Dan* cakes. Every one and almost everything in Serbia has its own special Christmas cake. Each member of the family, from the *Starechina* to the youngest baby: each animal from the horse and bullock down to the most insignificant member of the poultry yard: even the fields and orchards: each and all receive a present of a cake. But foremost amongst these ritual cakes are the three that the *Domatshitsa* places beside the torch. Dedicated to the lights of the firmament they are named respectively—"*Suntse*" (sun), "*Mesets*" (moon), and "*Vlashitshis*" (pleiades-heavens). After the ceremony of the bringing in of the torch and the sacred cakes is accomplished, the time has arrived for the entrance of the roast pig, and very appetizing and gay does the spluttering, crackling, smoking little animal look, decked out with rosemary ‡ sprigs and ivy, and with a big red apple and some nuts inserted between its jaws. Before a morsel has been swallowed, however, it is the duty of the *Starechina* to fill a cup with red wine, lift it high above his head, taste, and then empty the contents on the floor, whilst each of the company makes the sign of the Cross and exclaims: "All hail to the Little God!" § Milosh does not know why he pours out the wine, but he is quite positive that unless it were spilt "there would fall a dark shadow" upon him and his. Perhaps, too, it is not only material bad fortune he would prevent, but also sinister attacks from the blood-sucking spectres, the *Vukodlak*, or Vampires, who are supposed to hover round happy feasts, ready, unless the gods intervene, to cast an evil spell upon the food and the feasters, in which case

* The mistress, or head mother of the *Zadruga*—the principal female of the family, usually the wife of the *Starechina*.

† It is believed that any one whose shadow is cast on the wall by the Christmas torch, if appearing with too long a neck or without a head, is doomed to death during the following year.

‡ Rosemary is the favourite evergreen employed by the Serbs in their Christmas decorations. They have a legend that the Virgin was wont to dry the Holy Child's garments on a rosemary bush—hence its fragrance and the veneration it is held in by the faithful.

§ Serbs always commence their feasts by drinking to their God.

it is wise to propitiate with a libation the good and powerful deities. But neither Milosh nor his people realize in the least that in pouring out this libation he is doing exactly what his pagan ancestors did long, long centuries before the Little White Christ had come to conquer the old gods.

Everywhere throughout Serbia there exists a deep-seated superstition against harbouring animosity or keeping up a grudge against any one during the birth feast of the *Boyitch*. Hence the understanding that at the Little White God's supper, those who eat it together must forget all ill-feeling. Happily these people, for all their fierceness, blunt directness and excitability, are far from being quarrelsome in private life, and the domestic differences to be forgotten at the feast are generally of a very trifling nature.* Perhaps one of the daughters-in-law has bickered with another daughter-in-law, or, it may be, that their husbands have had angry words over the allotment of family labour. But all such childish quarrels are easily and quickly forgotten amid an outburst of hand and cheek kissing, and merry whole-hearted laughter. Every inducement is brought to bear to prevent the babies crying, for "a wailing babe on the Little God's *fête* means a wailing family for a year."

Voracious hunger is a necessary adjunct to a Slav *fête* all the world over, and a poor appetite is looked on almost as an insult; not only to the *Domatshitsa*, but to the Little One whose supper it is. Yet there is no objectionable forcing of second and third helpings, food is never thrust upon one; it is there to be enjoyed, and people are expected to eat as much as they can, the more the better.

By-and-by it grows very hot in the crowded room. The three branched torch on the floor still burns steadily, but those in the windows have gone out, and smell abominably. The odour of food, the strong tobacco, sheepskins and incense hangs heavy. "Hark! Listen to the wolves, they have had poor hunting, to judge by their howling." Faces are pressed to the windows and eyes follow some dark, scampering objects that are scurrying across the white wastes. A dismal, distant yelping echoes down the gorge, and dies away into the silence of the night.

There is yet an hour or two till bedtime, and as all have eaten and drunk to repletion, the *guzlé* † and the

* But when Serbs do quarrel they generally have a substantial cause and the quarrel is, as a rule, carried on from generation to generation.

† A stringed instrument resembling an elongated violin, possessing a resonance cavity which is closed above with a piece of skin, perforated in several parts. There is often but one string made out of the hairs of a horse's tail, and horse-tail hairs are used for the bow. But in this district the instrument has three strings.

svira * are brought out, and gay, resonant voices rise in some of the wild, national, dare-devil songs, the true interpretation of which only children of nature, such as these, can understand.

Every one must take their turn in the general entertainment, and the time passes so quickly that midnight sounds and the Torch of the Trinity shows signs of burning out before any one is aware that it is time to sing the lullaby of the Little God.

But just as the tapers have begun to flicker to their end, one by one, and the shadows amongst the great rafters stretched across the roof of the room have deepened to blackness, and when only the *Badgnak* remains to lighten the gloom, Milosh gives the note for the old, old hymn of the holy *Boyitch*. Low and very sweet in rhythm are the first two verses of this Serbian carol, the cadences of which are intended to imitate the rocking of a cradle. Then, all at once, the dreamy lullaby changes into a war march, the march of the celestial hosts of Heaven, and again the martial chanting dies in a melody, gentle yet gay. The Little One must sleep, and all the living beasts which He loves and has created ; the good beasts who were the first to welcome Him on earth, who shared their stable with Him, are called upon to hymn Him to rest, and from near and far the kindly, pious animals gather round His cradle. In the last verse they are all made to chant their parts ; each person in the community imitates the noise of a certain beast or bird, and in tune with the melody give out sounds made by the creature he or she represents. The cock crows—the part is taken by one of the daughters-in-law—the nightingale warbles, so does the thrush, the cuckoo calls and the cooing pigeon ; the frog croaks, the fox yelps, the sheep bleat, the ass brays, the lion roars, the horse neighs, the ox lows, even the pig squeaks ! And all through this strange hubbub, the music runs like a golden thread.

So closes the *Badgni Dan*, and every one goes, at last, to rest, with the exception of one of the young men whose duty it is to keep watch that the *Badgnak* does not burn out, for, should this happen before sundown on St. Stephen's Day, ill-fortune will, it is believed, most surely overtake the household.

* * * * * *

The morning of Christmas Day breaks. First creeps up an opaque, silvery greyness, followed by a rosy flush, that, rising in the East, dyes crimson the great white mountains, where they tower up an eternal rampart between the seen and the unseen. Suddenly there is a change, the red glow fades, the huge, rugged summits become in hue like *lapis lazuli*, and their lower slopes grow purple—darkest purple—that in another few moments

* A species of flute.

vanishes, leaving a world of such sparkling, dazzling purity that the eye quails beneath the glare.

And at the coming of the earliest sunbeam the door of the palisade encircling the Gengich homestead opens, and a troop of young girls emerge, bearing earthen pitchers on their heads. They are on their way to the well to draw the Christmas water. Much ceremony is attached to this drawing of water on Christmas morning. For the common belief is that the angels, when passing over them at midnight on Christmas Eve, touch the springs with their wings, and so render them pure; therefore only the pure and innocent are permitted to draw the water at daybreak, and the task naturally falls to the lot of the unmarried women, who each must throw a handful of corn and a sprig of basil into the water, the corn being a charm to bring about a harvest as plentiful as water, while the basil is an antidote against anything unclean, which might pollute the well during the coming twelve months. Like a picture from the Old Testament is the scene at this stone-topped fountain, and a considerable time goes by before the pitchers are filled, for the water has to be drawn up by hand, in a small canvas bag attached to a rope, and it takes quite five bagfuls to fill a pitcher.

The first bowlful of water taken from the spring is carefully conveyed back to the house by the girl who has drawn it, to be used in the baking of a cake, called the *tchesnitsa*, which cake is divided into as many portions at the midday meal as there are members of the family. In each portion is inserted a piece of wood, carved to represent some branch of agriculture. One, for instance, is cut in the form of a beehive, another in the shape of a shepherd's crook, another represents a spade, another a rake, and so on, and each person is given the implement used in the work he or she is most fitted to undertake. The *tchesnitsa* itself is marked with a Byzantine design in poppy seeds or sugar, and a sprig of the basil and rosemary decorations plucked from the bunch hanging below the holy picture at the entrance door, is stuck into it. This loaf is laid in the centre of the table, and ranks first amongst the comestibles. In it is secreted a silver coin, and the individual who discovers this in his or her portion will enjoy the best of good luck during the New Year.

Words cannot describe the noise and turmoil which pervade a Serbian home during the early hours of Christmas Day. Wild excitement and childish enthusiasm proclaim the importance of the occasion.

No one troubles much about breakfast. A drink of cold water, a few spoonfuls of sour curds, or a morsel of *paprika* bacon is sufficient to stave off the pangs of hunger until noon, when the

second Christmas feast is eaten. Meantime the house must be swept and garnished afresh with evergreens, and gaudy paper roses. Still more cakes must be baked, and the *Badgnak* must be kept alight, for it would never do if when the *Polaznik* * knocks at the door, he were to find that the hearth stone had grown cold. By-the-by, all is in order, and the household is ready to receive their Christmas guest, who, with a loud rap at the door and window, enters, stamping the snow from his sandalled feet. He is a fine specimen of the nation's manhood, this *Polaznik*. No wonder the girls cast soft glances at him behind the back of the *Domatshitsa*, as seizing a piece of the charred *Badgnak*, he twirls it round his head, crying, "Christ is born!" To which all give the usual answer, "In truth He is born!" while the *Domatshitsa* sprinkles the newcomer with corn. Followed by the laughing, chattering company, who crowd eagerly around to watch the proceedings, the *Polaznik* then goes to the hearth, strikes the log with the piece of wood which he has just taken from it, and, as the sparks fly out, and up above the big red hams and sides of bacon suspended within the chimney, he offers the family his good wishes. "May this holy, happy feast bring this house as many sheep, as many horses, as many cows, as many beehives, as many pieces of good money, with liberty and free conscience, as there fly out sparks from this *Badgnak!*" So saying, he throws a piece of silver or gold money on the ashes—which will next day be raked out by Milosh and given to the blacksmith to smelt in with the iron of the next plough purchased, to guarantee that the ground may prove fertile—and, his duty accomplished, the *Polaznik* is at liberty to join his young friends in a romp round the snowy fields.

But the fun is soon interrupted. Through the stillness comes the sound of many tinkling ox-bells, the voices of country folk on their way to the Church in Ak-Palanka. The highway leading to the town is thronged with peasants, sleighs and basket-topped bullock-carts, crowded with huddled, sheepskin-coated occupants. The distance is not great, so Milosh and his people leave the beasts to their Christmas breakfast † and start out on foot for the town.

* The *Polaznik* is the chief Christmas visitor, who is carefully chosen and is, as a rule, an unmarried son of the nearest neighbour. His duty is to call early on Christmas Day, and on entering the house, break off a smouldering portion of the *Badgnak*, saying in greeting to the *Starechina*, "Christ is born!" when he receives in reply the assurance—"In truth He is born, and His peace reigns with us."

† It is the custom amongst the Serbs to give each of the animals belonging to a farmstead a Christmas present on Christmas Day, which

The Church of Ak-Palanka is a mean enough little edifice, in no way different from the usual, and generally ugly Orthodox country church of the Balkans. On entering it, through a low-square-cut porch, adorned with moveable panels, portraying doleful visaged saints and angels of the Byzantine type, it is, at first, necessary to grope one's way about as the main portion of the interior is wrapped in darkness. Only the subdued light of the many swinging, blood-red lamps behind the gilded screen—the *ikonostas*—helps to show where the nave ends and the sanctuary begins. But once the eye has grown accustomed to the gloom it is possible to make out the faint gleam of the silver *ikons* representing our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mother and Saints, hanging on the *ikonostas*. This is divided into three panels, or entrances, the centre one, giving access to the altar, having a double door—"the royal door," as it is called, at the back of which hangs a crimson veil. Flashes of white and brilliant colour and the sharp glint of polished steel gradually pierce through the shadows, and soon it becomes evident that, though the utmost silence reigns, the place is thronged to the doors. The atmosphere is close and heavy with the fumes of incense, garlic and oily sheepskins. There are no seats, and the congregation stand shoulder to shoulder in a solid mass waiting patiently for the service to commence. Despite the obscurity it is not difficult to see that the faces of the worshippers are very devout, very happy, very interested. All at once from the Choir, located in a kind of box-like gallery at the extreme end of the nave facing the sanctuary, steals out the first notes of one of the most ancient of Serbian, probably of all Slavonic hymns, a hymn which has preserved its original exquisite simplicity through all the dreary, cruel centuries of religious strife; and somehow, by its very simplicity this old hymn carries the mind and heart back to the time when neither the Eastern nor the Western ritual existed, to the days when the ancestors of these people, having ceased, at least outwardly, to adore the powers of Nature, took for their Deity the God Whom the peasant fishermen of Galilee had accepted, and whose gospel they taught as they had heard it from the lips of the Master—

"Glory to the Highest One!
Sing, all ye faithful!
For ye the Christ this day was born,
And in a humble manger laid.
At the end of the ages
God was of a Virgin born!"

present consists of a double portion of food. Tapers are also lighted above the stalls of the oxen, and it is thought very unlucky to ill-treat or abuse a dumb beast during the Christmas festival.

The melodious, unaccompanied voices swell in unison and soar up along with the clouds of incense used—to quote the Orthodox catechist—"to show the faithful that just as incense is always burning in the fire of the censer, and ascends with sweet odours upwards, so, in the same way, ought their prayers to be kindled unceasingly by the fire in their hearts of hope, faith and love towards the Eternal God, that these prayers should ascend fragrant and acceptable before the Throne of the Divine Majesty." As the final notes of the half-joyous, half-melancholy chant die into silence the doors of the *ikonostas* open and a flood of light dispels the darkness. The full glories of the holy place can now be gazed upon—the altar covered with its embroidered cloths; especially the *antiminsion;* the gorgeous square of purple silk which covers the chief relic of Ak-Palanka; the red and gold bound book of the Gospels; "The Life-giving Cross," the pyx containing the Sacrament, reserved for the sick; the strip of Oriental carpet laid between "the royal door" and the altar, upon which no layman is permitted to tread; the lofty bees-wax tapers set high in the seven-branched candlestick; the big, ruby-tinted lamps; and lastly, the sacred vestments of all colours—white, green, purple, red and gold, which are worn by the tall, stooped old man with the long, white hair, the stern, ascetic mouth and dim eyes who regards his children so severely yet so tenderly. As he pauses for a moment before saluting the holy *ikons* one feels that his soul dominates every other soul present. The silence is unbroken, the atmosphere is full of emotion. They love and admire their *pap*, these peasant folk, and has he not a right to claim both obedience and affection? A little over a year ago did he not take his place in their ranks, as becomes a soldier of the Cross; did he not keep step with them on their long marches, night after night, through the driving blizzards; did he not go down with Serbia's army to the very gates of hell itself, and there help to carry the holy Cross to victory against the Crescent; did he not succour the wounded and comfort the dying under hottest fire; did he not encourage the weak, praise the gallant; did he spare his tired old limbs, or seek reward for his services? No—every heart can answer, no—and so, between the "little father" and his children exists that perfect understanding which is born of mutual love and mutual sacrifice. The whole scene, or rather, the spirit of the scene belongs, not to these present materialistic years, but to the time of the early Fathers. There is absolutely no sign of modernity. Here one is back in the first centuries and the child-like, fervent spirit of the Christ's teaching in its primitive purity, is all-pervading.

It is the custom in Serbia on this festival for the men to attend Church girded with all their weapons, and wearing their home-spun mantles, or sheepskins, thrown over the rifles slung across their shoulders. And foremost in the assembly are the great, weather-beaten fellows, armed to the teeth, who are the flower of their gallant little country's first line of defence. Hardened and roughened by a lifetime of exposure to sun, wind, rain and snow, with eyes in which the fierce joy of a successful war still lingers, with faces showing recently healed scars, these are the peasant sons of the peasant nation which has, for many centuries done outpost duty for Christian Europe.

As is usual the Mass is celebrated with singing, incense and fullest ceremonial, and the Cherubic Hymn with which the long Liturgy opens now peals out from the throats of the unseen choir as the priest, followed by his taper-bearers, re-enters the royal doors, and the crimson veil descends between the altar and the worshippers, to rise again for a few minutes during the recitation of the Creed, after which the *ikonostas* remains shut until the Benediction and the termination of the service. The language used is ancient Slavonic, the Mother tongue of the entire Slavic race, the tongue which, to the Serbs, forms an integral part of their religion.

The whole building is presently enveloped and obscured in rolling clouds of incense, while the crowd, devout and seemingly unwearied, still stands tightly and painfully wedged together, every neck craned to catch a glimpse of the holy, glittering emblems. Now and then piety finds outlet in fervent crossing and salutations, but there is to-day no space for the prostrations, usually indulged in during the repetition of the Liturgy.

With the Benediction the service is brought to an end, and as the singers break into a loud, cheerful carol, the priest comes back through the sanctuary door and walks down into the body of the Church to greet his people in person. He has a command and some advice to give them, the only sermon they ever hear from his quiet lips ; for the Eastern Church does not favour sermons. But since time was young it has been the duty of the Serbian clergy to impress on their followers the necessity of putting far from them on the Christmas festival all secret or open hatred, malice and unforgiveness. Indeed, in many districts those who are at feud are publicly called upon to come forward, and, in the presence of the *pap*, make reconciliation. The ancient formula, commanding the faithful to " forgive as they would wish to be forgiven," has a very real meaning, coming as it does from the heart of this old soldier-priest whose whole life has been spent for the benefit of his country and his

people, through years of peace and still more, through years of war.

"Children, it is God's will that there be peace on earth and goodwill among men to-day, and whosoever disobeys this command draws down a heavy curse upon his home. Let the peace of God, therefore, rest upon us all on this, the birthday of the Prince of Peace, so that we may now and hereafter worship Him in Spirit and in Truth, and when the hour of death comes we may behold our lights burning with clearness and confidence."

Within the holy place the lamps are still red, and over the top of the *ikonostas* their light penetrates into the dark nave, illuminating the thin, wax-white countenance of the speaker, the patient, broad-browed faces of the women, the hard-bitten, war-scarred faces of the men, the steel of their knives and rifles. One by one, in single file, all present come forward and bend to kiss the hands of the *pap*, and for each in turn he has an intimate fatherly greeting and blessing. And when the last baby has been praised, the most hopeless character smiled on, and when the doors have closed behind the bent old figure, when the last pair of sandalled feet have taken a muffled departure, it is with a sense of unreality, of having come into close contact with that unseen, indescribable Something which the world knows not, and about which it cares less, that one makes one's way out again into the street.

In the open place before the church all the country life of the district seems to have gathered, and a more animated scene could scarcely be imagined. A noise like the humming of a swarm of bees rises from far and near. The sun is pouring down on the sparkling heaps of snow, piled along the paths which have been cleared. The national gaiety of the people, their brilliant costumes, ready smiles, vivacious gestures, and delight in the holiday, are strikingly evident.

The inevitable stalls are covered with merchandise, brightly coloured stuffs, embroideries, opankas, sugared cakes in the form of all kinds of animals, clumps of red and white skull caps, three-branched red, green and blue bees-wax candles, earthenware pottery, brass and silver ornaments, tinsel and paper flowers, lemonade bottles, brass fez presses, cheap ikons, religious pictures, and so on. Highly smelling billy-goats, black, red and pink pigs, poultry, long-tailed, slim-legged little ponies, and fat-tailed sheep bleat, squeal, cackle, whinny and baa in discord within the slushy enclosure dignified by the name of the cattle-market, while lean, wolfish dogs, of odd species, mount guard.

A great cauldron of soup, a fearful concoction of maize, meat

shreds, garlic and onions, is cooking over a tremendous open fire before which, also, a small hairy pig is being turned round and round on a big spit. Three or four yards away, another small brother porker, very much against his will, is being executed by a couple of boys, while an excited and hungry group of countryfolk are jostling and elbowing each other round the scene of action, disputing for the best slice of the roasts cooking and still alive. Travelling *Guslars* are lifting up their voices in every direction, chanting their eternal blood-stirring songs of supernaturally strong Serbian Tsars, of noble *Haiduks* * and their miraculous escape from their Ottoman pursuers, of the cunning and hospitable *Jabtatsi*. The Tsiganes are playing farther away down beside the barrack walls. Roars of jolly laughter are coming from a band of boys and girls gathered near one of the canteens. The pretty girl in the centre of the merry group, who is standing beside the tall, loose-limbed young fellow in the more than usually resplendent waistcoat, presented him with a paper and tinsel rose on leaving the Church, thereby signifying her acceptance of him as a husband. Of course, the match had been carefully arranged weeks ago by the parents, and the rose-giving is merely part of the customary formula, but, nevertheless, neither seems at all loath to fall in with the parental arrangements.

As the town is in such close proximity to the frontier, the crowds which throng its streets and market are not entirely made up of the native population. Mahommedans figure largely, especially in the vicinity of some half-dozen queer-looking, red-fezzed personages, who squat cross-legged on dirty rugs, each with a brass pot of ink, a jar full of wooden pens, sheets of paper, a sand sifter, a coffee apparatus, and a Turkish pipe set in front of him. These gentlemen are Mahommedan professional letter writers, and they do a roaring business amongst those of their own race, but receive scant support from the Christians who are seldom so illiterate as not to be able to produce some member in each family able to read and write. Besides the Mahommedans, there are Albanians, recognizable by their white skull caps; Vlachs, who are wanderers, like the Tsiganes; Jews, who in Serbia and throughout all the Balkan States, are mostly of Spanish origin, and superior to their kinsmen in most other Central

* The *Haiduks* were those Serbs, who, in the time of the Turkish oppression, escaped into the mountains and forests and there organized themselves into bands under a leader who was entitled the *Harambaska*. The finest and most patriotic of the Serbs became *Haiduks*, and they carried on their guerilla warfare against the enemy with ruthless energy. The *Jabtatsi* were the concealers of the *Haiduks*, who gave them warning of the approach of the foe, hid them and fed them.

European countries. Then, too, there are Bulgars, cautious and suspicious about most things. Roumanians, suave in tongue and manners, carrying, many of them, traces of their Roman descent in their haughty, clear-cut features; Greeks, hawking around wares which probably have been smuggled across the boundary, and all sorts of doubtful characters drift to and fro, seeking whom they may devour.

The roads leading out to the country are blocked with trailing processions of animals and ox-waggons and troops of peasants, brilliantly clothed and looking like so many bouquets of multi-coloured flowers. On this occasion Milosh and his company are well in advance of the general exodus. They have met every-one they hoped to meet, and, besides fulfilling his obligations to his Church, Milosh has contrived to drive a few excellent bargains, consequently, the Gengich family, like their neighbours, are cheery and garrulous, pleased with the weather, the fair, the holiday, and themselves. Arguing, chaffing, flinging broadcast noisy salutations, laughter and jokes, and getting back as good as they give, they tramp vigorously homewards, speculating as to whether the female members of the family who have been told off to keep the *Badgnak* alight, to baste the pig over the fire in the courtyard, to mind the babies, and otherwise make themselves useful, have done their duty.

The waggons in the outgoing procession are so heavily laden with purchases, that there is no room in them for the owners, who swing along perfectly indifferent to the loads which they also carry. One must visit these lands to learn what enduring pack animals human beings can make. Where is the English-woman who could walk erect under the burden of a sucking pig, a couple of well-developed fowls, and on her head, a basket over-flowing with onions, cakes, dried fish, odds and ends of hardware, and tinsel decorations, that are to be hung round the walls and sacred pictures in honour of the festival? Yet no matter how gigantic their burdens, no matter what the weather, or what their circumstances, these Serbian maidens and matrons, one and all, have found time to place a flower—a paper one it being winter—behind their ears. The breath of the mountains has brought the blood to their lips and cheeks; they ask no more of life than what life has already given them.

The floor in the Gengich farmstead has been cleared of the straw on which the supper was eaten last night, and the long table is set for dinner. The pig is done to a turn and splutters appetizingly beneath its rosemary wreaths. Though the daily fare of peasants such as these is frugal in the extreme, on the great holiday they lay themselves out to eat regardless of expense, and a long

time is spent over the dinner. Besides roast pork and cake there are numerous other delicacies. Yeast bread, crusted over with poppy seeds ; white curd cheese smothered in sour clotted cream ; *Kaimak* bowls of fresh milk, sweetened to nauseation ; jam ; *kisela chorba*, a nourishing soup flavoured with lemons made from poultry ; a rich meat stew, rendered savoury by the presence of thyme, mint, mace and a quantity of "*paprika*," the omnipresent red pepper so dear to the souls of all the people south of the Danube. To wash all this down there is red wine, followed by *rakija*,* and black coffee, brewed in a copper pot.

It requires very little to make the Serbian heart dance and sing. A plentiful meal, sunshine, a warm fire, congenial companionship ; these are all they ask. Here they sit, these big men, their weapons bristling in their belts, their babies on their knees, waited on by their serene-faced women, indifferent to, probably ignorant of the problems of the world outside their borders. Their ability to defend these frontiers against foreign aggressors is, probably, the only anxiety which weighs on their hearts. But the Teutonic *Drang nach Osten*, the ever-increasing clang of armaments could not fail to depress their spirits. "If these nations would but leave us unmolested to till our own fields, develop our industries and our railways, if they would cease to persecute our kinsfolk who dwell outside our borders, we would be the happiest of people. We have heard from those who have travelled far how difficult life is in other lands, we have heard how a few men rule, while the others, for miserable wages, are obliged to become their slaves. But here in Serbia we know nothing of these things, we do not have to argue about bad wages, for each of us lives with his family on his own property, and we need no servants, for we do the labour ourselves, and no man, not the King himself, would dare to take from us, even were we up to our necks in debt, our holdings, our homes, our tools. Have we reason then to envy any one ? Tell us ? " †

In words something like these Milosh and his people would have replied to any one who thought it worth while to question

* A kind of strong brandy.

† By a Homestead Law of 1873, it was provided that a minimum of 3·41 hectares (about 8½ acres) of land, with the house, tools and farm implements, as well as the necessary cattle for the working of the farm, could not be seized and sold for private debts. It is also forbidden to the agriculturist to run into debt by giving promissory notes. As, however, all goods movable and immovable could be sold for obligations due to the State such as the payment of taxes, a recent law has been passed regulating the quantity of land which might be sold, even on behalf of the State. (See "Economic Survey of Serbia," by Militch Radovanovitch, Professor of the University of Belgrade.)

him or his on matters patriotic, social, or economic. But this is a holiday, the festival on which bitter thoughts and words, even against the National Teutonic enemy, must be avoided. So the conversation turns on more homely interests—the prosperity which is likely to follow upon the opening up of the new railways, the probability of an increased export during the next year of dried fruits, the excellence of the new prune drying furnaces, the profits and losses of the local *Bacije*.* And, of course, pig raising, the chief industry of the people, is thoroughly discussed. Milosh and his people are very proud of their breed of swine, which are all of the fat, disease impervious species known as the *Shumadija*, and the greater part of the Gengich income is realized in the pork slaughter-house of Belgrade from whence Vienna and Budapest and various markets of Western Europe receive much of their best pork.

Dusk has fallen by the time a move is made, and the younger members of the party go out to see to the live stock, and to light the Christmas tapers over the stalls. Meanwhile the room is cleared for dancing, and candles are again placed in the windows, because, though Christmas Eve is the special night on which the spirits of the dead are supposed to roam abroad, the more restless and unhappy souls are believed to haunt the dwellings of the living for the next eight nights, as though unsatisfied with the light which has already been given them on the *Badgni Dan*. And as the stars spring out one by one in the black, blue sky the family reassemble, stray guests arrive asking for hospitality, to which request Milosh answers: "Willingly, brother (or sister), gladly enter and good welcome to you!" And presently two professional blind *guslars*, make their appearance, a pair of tall, wild-looking, dark-eyed fellows wearing loathsomely dirty sheepskins and ragged footgear. But however disreputable the *guslars* may be, here and everywhere they are received as honoured visitors, as much to-day as in centuries gone by, when, in the absence of newspapers and letters, they travelled over the countryside from dwelling to dwelling, carrying news and gossip as well as the national music, poetry and history. Cheered by the general kindliness, several large glasses of *rakija*, and good food, they begin to chant one of the stormy war songs so dear to their hearts. And as the great, resonant voices blend in a duet, echoing and re-echoing among the old rafters, enthusiasm and patriotism rise also. The entire audience joins in. Glasses are filled and

* Most of the hill country of Serbia is rich in pasture, and from ancient times associations have existed bearing the name of Bacije. The members of these associations graze their cattle in common, and butter and cheese are manufactured in common for export, chiefly for the Turkish markets.

refilled, eyes blaze with frenzied excitement, sandalled feet, and work and war-blackened hands beat and clap time to the melody, till, finally, the masculine element find an outlet for their feelings by brandishing their murderous-looking, curved knives above their heads, yelling defiance and discharging the contents of their revolvers up the chimney.

No one can accuse the Serbs of intemperance. On ordinary occasions cold water and milk are their favourite beverages, and it would require very many brimming bumpers of the sour native wine to disturb even the weakest head. But on *fête* days the *rakija* flows freely, and it is regarded as a breach of good manners to abstain from drinking so long as others can drink, and the glasses have to be replenished at the termination of every song, dance, and lull in the conversation. All at once, between the tapers flaring in the window ledge, two or three ghost-like faces make their appearance, and the flickering flames are reflected back in jealous, dark eyes, eyes that might very well belong to some of the dreaded evil spirits that are believed to menace the happiness of those still on this side of the river of death. But evil spirits would certainly not be hailed with the enthusiasm immediately evinced by the feasters. Up go the glasses, and a rush is made to the door to admit the *Tsiganes*—for it is they—who come slouching in, a company of the filthiest creatures it would be possible to conceive. They are seemingly as certain of their welcome as were the *guslars*, for having saluted the assembly with the usual formula, adding, "God assist this honourable house," and having received in return the greeting, "Good luck this happy night," they proceed, without further ado, to deposit their lean, sinewy, verminous, odoriferous persons in the warmest spot before the fire, draw out and light their stinking black pipes, and in every way make themselves comfortable, darting from time to time sly glances at their surroundings from under their matted elf-locks.

These Tsiganes, though held in more contempt by the industrious Serbs than by the majority of the Slav peoples, play, nevertheless, an indispensable part in the life of the people. One meets them in every lonely mountain pass, on every plain, in every market. Their brown tents are pitched outside every village; every large Serbian town has its Tsigane quarter. With that mysterious, subtle, arrogant grace, which is their characteristic, they journey from place to place, begging, stealing, telling lies and telling fortunes, beguiling souls with their music; and no matter how strongly the Serbian peasantry may disapprove of them and their parasitical ways, like all Slavs, they are under the Tsigane spell.

A Bosnian Farm House.

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Having supplied the newcomers with considerably more than their fair share of *rakija*, the dancing commences. Taking up their position alongside the spectators on one of the benches, now pushed against the walls in order to leave room for the performers, they get ready their flageolets, bagpipes and violins, while the *guslars* likewise tune up their primitive, lamenting little instruments.

There are hundreds of different *kolos* (dances) in Servia, and it is the most popular of these with which the ball opens to-night. Men and women join hands in two circles, and commence to turn around, at first slowly, but gathering speed as they turn—one circle moving in the opposite direction to the other. The band plays with the fire and vigour only possible to such musicians. The dancers are flushed with youth and wine, their faces flame with love of life, love of country, love of freedom. Faster and faster goes the melody, and faster and faster fly the noiseless, leather-padded feet, to the throbbing, swinging, savage, passionate dance. They are singing, chanting rather, one of the strange, monotonous songs that so often sound as much like a shriek of agony as a cry of merriment. In these dance songs may be heard the brave shout of the gallant people who have ever laughed their tormentors in the face, and who will die, if need be, with this same mocking laugh on their lips. Listening to this music there comes to the memory the tale of how, once upon a time, in a village ruined by the Turks, a desolate little company of Serbian girls was found amongst the dead bodies and reeking, smoking ruins, dancing and singing the *Kolo;* and how the leader, on being questioned as to how it was that she and her companions could still dance and sing while the corpses of their people lay stark under their eyes, when their homes were razed to the ground, and their country made desolate, replied, with defiant laughter: "The enemy have of truth burnt down our homes and slain our parents, our sweethearts, and our brothers; they have also wreaked their fury on our bodies, and despoiled us of our maidenhood, but they cannot force us to show the faces of cowards. We dance to show them that we are still free Serbs, and when we have made them understand that we shall throw ourselves into the river and take our souls to God, of Whom we shall demand justice."

There can be no doubt these people have probed deeply into the great passions, the pleasures and sorrows of life. If they have experienced great tribulation, they have also experienced the extreme joys which can only be felt by those who have greatly suffered. Not for them is the drab middle land of feeling.

It is after midnight and the *Badgnak* has, at last, crumbled

to greyness. The candles, all save one, have gone out. The first twenty-four hours of the Christmas festival are sped, and to-morrow at dawning the women, according to custom, will go to the cemetery, some three kilometres distant, to pay their respects to the dead.* They will stick three tiny, lighted bees-wax tapers into the snow at the head of each grave, and beside them a brightly coloured, earthenware pot filled with burning incense, and as the smoke from these pots curls up into the frosty air, they will call on the names of their lost ones, and tear their hair, and rock their bodies backwards and forwards, wailing and lamenting—"as does the cuckoo." † Sometimes they will cry and sometimes they will chant, long and monotonously, and when they are tired and can wail or chant no longer, they will bring from their baskets little round maize cakes and bowls of hot meat stew, and sour curds and red wine, and on every frozen resting-place they will spread a white embroidered napkin, and on it an excellent feast for those who have passed—though in this fact the mourners do not appear to find much solace—to the land where there is neither hunger nor thirst, neither cold nor heat. To the Tsiganes the quality and quantity of these grave meals are matters of much interest, and when the last of the mourners have taken their departure, they tumble out from their lurking-places and swoop, in company with flocks of hungry ravens, crows, and pigeons, upon the viands. Every one knows that the Tsiganes and the wild birds have gobbled the eatables and drunk the wine, but every one will pretend it is the dead who have eaten and drunk and enjoyed the good things offered them.

By the feeble light of the last expiring taper the Christmas party is making ready to break up. They are singing the good-bye song, and it is a sad one. A peculiar melancholy has descended on the merry making, though there is apparently nothing to account for this sudden depression of spirits. The animals have been well tended, no one has spoken roughly to either man or beast. One of the girls runs across the yard to make certain that the candles set above the stalls have not been blown out by draught, but she finds they have all burnt to their ends. In the warm, hay-perfumed darkness can be heard the stumbling and breathing and munching of the dumb existences.

* The days intervening between Christmas Day and the Feast of the Three Kings, are entitled "the unchristian days," the reason for so calling them being obscure, though in earlier times this week may have possibly been given over to the observance of some of the ancient pagan customs.

† The word *Kukavichili* means to mourn like a cuckoo, and the cry of this bird is thought by the Serbs to sound like the cry of one who has been bereaved.

The girl comes back, but her feet drag heavily as she crosses the threshold, and a blast of the icy wind that has blown up during the night follows her in at the door. A shiver runs over the company, though not from cold, and the Tsiganes glance furtively one at the other and hug their rags more closely. There must be some evil influence * at work, despite the fact that the *Badgnak* has smouldered redly for a day and a night, else why has all the brightness and happiness vanished ? And why do the farewell wishes for "A glad year," sound so hollow ? Has a Vampire been hovering around the feast waiting to suck the blood of the feasters, to bring on them the plague, cholera, madness or strife, and has the good influence of St. George been overruled—who can say ?

The stars have every one gone out, like the candles. The purple sky has grown clouded, the night is very dark, a furious wind whirls the snowflakes in the faces of the departing guests. A roll of thunder peals and is followed by a blinding flash of lightning which reveals for an instant the shrouded crests of the great mountains.

"*Bogami, Bogami !* † it is an evil night, the winter will be a long one, but what must be must be—All Glory be to God !"

And Gengich Milosh speaks truly, he knows the signs, the winter will assuredly be a long and bitter one, and many will die before the spring time.

* Serbians believe that evil spirits are able to cast their influence over people, and a continuous conflict is thought to rage between the patron saint of the family (whose yearly *Slava* or Feast Day must be duly observed by the household) and these evil spirits who seek to injure the community under the protection of the saint.

† "God ! God !"

CHAPTER XIV

SONG AND DANCE AMONG THE SERBS

Coming down through the centuries, never written, passed on by tradition, the Serbian folk melodies—cheerful by contrast with those of the sister Slav peoples—are so elusive, so sweet, so spirited that we can easily imagine them to be the same as those played and sung by their forefathers who ages ago entered the territory of the unfriendly Avars, armed only with their primitive musical instruments, pleading: "We have no iron in our land, therefore we have no spears, but we sing and make such music that it can tear the hearts from out the bodies of our foes." * It is the music of a people standing at the converging lines of many races, of a people whose minds possess all the subtlety of the East, with the strength of the West, the fatalism of the Asiatic along with the energy of the European.

Both in music and in poetry, as in everything else Slavonic, Christianity and paganism are so intermingled that it is scarcely possible to say exactly where the one begins and the other ends. In the ninth century, when the brothers Cyrillus and Methodius came to preach the gospel of the Little God, the Serbs and their Slav kindred in South-Eastern Europe were tardily, indeed reluctantly, converted to the new faith. Truth to tell, they regretted parting from the old religion of their fathers, and when their pagan altars were destroyed at the instigation of the missionaries, they refused to throw down the foundations of these altars or the pedestals on which had been erected the images of their heathen gods. Though the Cross was raised on the ancient holy places, the people continued to plant flowers and trees round what was left of their pagan altars, and these flowers and trees, in growing, so united the old stones of the but half-abandoned religion with the new stones of

* Karamsin in his "History of the Russian Empire."

Christianity that they became, in time, indistinguishable one from the other.*

Let us picture a Serbian home on the night of one of its festival days, and see into the great room filled with the family and the guests as the flames from the blazing fire go hurrying up the yawning chimney to the purple sky, and their ruddy light plays on the coloured arabesques and silver-braided jackets of the women, on the glittering ornaments, necklaces and buttons, on the pistols and knife-hilts in the belts of the men, on the semicircle of crouching figures, on faces eager and very purposeful.

One of the women present is celebrated in the district as the possessor of a fine voice. She is called on for a song, and, coming forward between the company and the fireplace, she takes her place in the full glare of the burning logs and the tapers. Clasping her hands behind her back—for Serbian women always sing without instrumental accompaniment—she jerks her head back and as she does so her beauty is fully shown. She has keen, golden brown eyes, wherein every gleam of light is reflected, a short, well-cut face, the chief fault of which lies in the cheek bones, that are perhaps somewhat high, a clear brown skin, tinted like a sun-kissed peach, and red bronze hair, which, by reason of her married state, is discreetly folded away under the scarlet and white kerchief that is tied in a knot at her neck. Her teeth are beautiful, large, pearly, and swift to flash upon the slightest provocation into a smile. Though she has borne three children, though she has toiled from sunrise to sunset all her life—she is now twenty, and at nine years of age the women of her race begin to work—in the wide fields beside the men, she carries herself like a youthful careless goddess. With square shoulders, broad rounded hips, and large, shapely, sandalled feet, with her firm, high-set breasts swelling and sinking beneath the half revealing folds of her chemise and her blue and silver *cabanitza*, she might stand for the impersonation of her country—Young Serbia. Her song begins with the usual prolonged high note, followed by a recitative, and then comes the melody, that takes the place of the chorus in the songs of other lands. Untrained, unspoilt and individual, as the human voice is made by nature

* To-day in every Serbian family on New Year's Eve, a bunch of leaves, tied together with a piece of the inner bark of the linden tree—the tree which legend declares grew around the Slavonic pagan altars—and decorated with ribbon and tin discs, is hung over the entrance door of the house, where it remains untouched until the next year, when it is cast into a clear, running stream, to make room for a fresh "*Erich*," as this half-pagan, half-Christian symbol is called.

to be; deep and full, having the peculiar carrying power of the voice that is born in the mountains; this girl's singing captivates and thrills as no modern, sophisticated vocalism would do.* As a lark sings of its life and its love on a sunny May morning when the sky is blue, so she sings of the simple, beautiful things that matter, the things that lie nearest the heart of her gallant, virile, tender nation. Of the same things did her foremothers sing a thousand years ago, for life with the Serb women in the olden, long gone time was much the same as it is to-day. She tells of the home where, as a maiden, she sat spinning in winter evenings with her sisters round the fire; of the acacia and plum blossom scented summer nights; of the village square, where, before her marriage—with her long hair unbound—she danced the *kolo* with her *paranymphos*.†

She tells also of her brother,‡—and here only does melancholy

* Serbian songs are divided into two classes. The first class are rather short in composition, of varied measures, either lyrical or epic, and are sung without instrumental accompaniment—these songs are the "*Shenske pjesne*," or female songs, because they are, for the most part, composed by women. They are usually of a domestic character, and relate of all the different incidents and relations of home life, its duties, holidays, loves and disputes. And the second class of national songs are comprised of long, epic tales in verses of five regular trochaic feet, and are chanted to the *guslé*, the primitive instrument already mentioned. These epic poems are called "*Jumatchke pjesme*," and they are made and sung by the men. They relate of the heroic deeds of the nation, and tell of how the national heroes, chiefly the mighty Marko, defeated Serbia's enemies.

† The *paranymphos* is the legalized man friend of a Serbian woman. This species of friendship is entered on, as a rule, before the Church altar, and is seldom or never broken. Good-fellowship and intimacy between the sexes, in which the sexual element does not enter, is universal all over Serbia.

‡ In Serbia brothers and sisters stand in a curious relation. They have more the appearance of lovers, and the relationship is apparently more affectionate than that between husband and wife. Tender sexual love is somewhat rare, and very often when sweethearts part in Serb life, or in Serb poetry, they advise each other to choose another love. Though unmarried persons of both sexes are allowed to enjoy free and easy intercourse—which seldom degenerates into immorality, firstly, because the people are naturally moral, and secondly, because the penalties following upon a breach of morals are cruelly severe—nothing is so unfavourable to real affection between sweethearts and husbands and wives as the way marriages are here contracted. Among the Serbs the Oriental custom, according to which marriages are arranged by the parents of the parties, often without the two concerned knowing each other, is still kept up. Consequently, though flirtations are indulged in, they are of a somewhat lukewarm nature, for there always lurks the knowledge that love, when given, may have to be re-called and crushed at the parental bidding. So it comes about that—with the exception of maternal love—the love between brothers and sisters is the most passionate. Serb sisters cling

disturb the cheerful serenity of the limpid melody—who romped with her and her sisters in the fields, who carried the water-pots for them from the well, who had the brightest hair in all the land, and the fiercest eyes, and the steadiest hand to hold a rifle ; who was as tall as a young oak and strong as a stag, who kissed her and her sisters a farewell one black morning over twelve months ago, and armed to the teeth, with the love of his native land in his heart, took the road to battle along with his compatriots. He has not returned, not even sent a message home. Perhaps it is his death voice which she fancies she hears whispering in the moaning wintry winds, in the torrents, in the rustling of the forest branches.* And as the tears start to her bright eyes, as the pulse in her throat beats under the smooth skin, the fingers of her listeners close fiercely, convulsively, on pistols and daggers, eyes rise to the stacked-up rifles near the door, and the lust and

to their brothers as their natural protectors. To have no brother is a terrible misfortune, almost regarded as a disgrace, and there are hundreds of women songs telling how affectionately Serbian sisters regard their brothers. There is one song that actually relates how artificial means to obtain a brother was resorted to. It tells how a brotherless girl manufactured one out of white and pink silk, " wound around with a stick of boxwood, with two black stones for eyes, two leeches as eyebrows, two rows of pearls as teeth," and how " with honey in her mouth," she entreated him " to eat and speak." And there is also another poem which sings of how a wife lost in battle her brideman—*paranymphos*—that is to say her masculine legitimate life friend and also her brother and husband, and she mourns her loss thus :—

" For my husband I will cut off my hair,
For my brideman I will tear my face,
For my brother I will pluck my eyes out.

" For my hair, if I cut it, will grow again ;
For my face, if I tear it, will heal again ;
But my eyes, they will never heal again ;
Nor the heart which bleedeth for my brother."

As a matter of fact the loves of brother and sister, of legalized friends of opposite sexes, and of parents and children, are the loves most sung about. Demonstrative displays of emotion between the sexes—except in these three relationships—are rare; and the Serbian epic poems are brutally unemotional and mainly heroic. In one epic Marko Kralyewitch calls his wife most unpleasant names because she was human enough to make a few mild advances to himself.

* The Serbs are full of superstition. They have foreboding dreams of good and evil omens, they believe in witchcraft, and are fatalistic in the extreme. But they do not believe much in spirits which can be seen though they fancy they can hear the voices of the dead calling and whispering—as on Christmas Eve—and they thus keep up a curious conversational intercourse with their departed friends, fancying they hear ghost voices in all the voices of nature.

fury for vengeance kindles in faces well-accustomed to the gaze of death. Then the song ends abruptly in a wild, passionate cry, a cry half triumphant, half revengeful, and the singer takes her place meekly again amongst the women.

Then the chief man of the family, *guslé* in hand, rises to his feet, and commences to chant one of the traditional *guslar* heroic songs, which are sung by the men of the household and the professional bards. By the recitation of such songs the ancient and modern history of Serbia is handed down and orally imparted to the nation.* In contrast to the powerful and romantic tales of bygone heroes, ancient Kings and Tsars, and the dignity of the verses that relate of the deeds of the great makers of Serbian history, the musical accompaniment—if such it can be called—furnished by the *guslé*, of which the strings are twanged only at the end of each long verse, is monotonous and feeble. But there is the same curious fascination to be found in the rhythmic, half-spoken, half-chanted male songs as in the more tuneful and unaccompanied, lyrical female songs—the "*Shenske pjesne*." As it has been said, the characteristic of all Serbian music—as well as singing and poetry—is its naturalness. It expresses the ideas of a brave, simple, unsophisticated people. Listening to their melodies, their poetry, the recollection comes of how frequently the Serbs, and indeed all the Slavonic peoples are accused of being indecent, coarse, and rough in their speech and thoughts and actions. But to spend even one evening like this in their company is to prove how unfounded is this accusation. To be sure they discourse and sing with perfect frankness on natural facts seldom mentioned by more civilized, and consequently, less pure and wholesomely minded and mannered peoples. But they are, at any rate, honest, and in their conversation and songs there is no smirking innuendo ; they are still, happily for themselves, a half barbaric race, and they perceive nothing to be ashamed of in the things of nature. In the verses which Gengich Milosh sings to his family, heroism is depicted as the highest virtue. There is no tender love—that is left for the women and boys to dilate upon—and if love chances to be referred to, it is in the most casual way, for affection is never allowed to influence a hero's actions. The only love which is permitted to move a Serb is love of country, and, to a very

* The professional Serbian *guslars*—bards—are generally blind men who are taught the traditional songs of the race, which all relate of Serbia's ancient liberty and heroism, the splendour of her Tsars, the stand made by the Serbian *rayahs* against the Turkish oppressors, of supernatural visions prophesying the coming fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the rise of a new and free Serbian Empire.

limited extent, love of parents. What may be called artificial nobility and chivalry are not dwelt on. No effort is made to present the warrior as an "honourable" being—the Serbian code of honour being utterly different from that of the more "civilized" races. For example, to make love to another man's wife is sometimes regarded as a regrettable incident in the eyes of the "cultured" nations, but it is a crime of the deepest dye according to Serbian opinion. To kill, and burn, and cheat an open enemy is to earn the admiration of the Serbs, but not to strike him when he is down. The scenes that are depicted in Milosh's song—one of the most ancient and famous of the national epics, kept alive by the *Guslari*—glow with colour. As is common in nearly all Slavonic poetry at the outset, in the form of a question the subject is introduced. Translated roughly the opening verse of the old Starechina's song runs as follows :—

> "What's so white upon yon verdant forest ?
> Is it snow or is it swans assembled ?
> Were it snow, it surely had been melted ;
> Were it swans, long since they had departed.
> Lo ! It is not swans, it is not snow there,
> 'Tis the tents of Aga, Hassan Aga ! "

It is a song that touches and fires its hearers, it is one which has never failed to steel the heart of the nation, for it dwells on Serbia's long struggle against her hereditary Ottoman foes, the struggle in which generations upon generations of Serbs have shed their blood to attain their liberty, preferring centuries of bloodshed and agony rather than slavery. And as the deep, time-hoarsened voice trolls out the interminable verses, as the wild unvarying melody goes on, suddenly the violent, pent-up racial passion overflows, tears course down sun-bronzed cheeks, faces are laid on outflung arms, sobs resound, and not one in the little gathering but vows, that "if the good kind God so permits," he or she will die as gladly as did the ancient heroes, to ensure their country's freedom.

Some time elapses before thoughts can be brought back to the peaceful, normal events of everyday life. The spell of the glorious past is difficult to break, but presently, one of the younger men starts a roguish, mocking love ditty. For it must not be supposed that the expression of amorous passion is entirely ignored among Serbians. But it is an interlude, a game, a passing dream of youth, a pleasant, fleeting episode of early life. Yet fanciful and trifling as the love songs may appear, they are in close touch with nature, nature elemental, and absolutely unashamed. They are pagan in their adoration of the beautiful,

pagan in their unrestrained sensuality, in their entire freedom from all that is morbid. A Serbian love affair corresponds more or less to a flirtation amongst more conventional peoples, which both parties foresee can end in nothing, for Serbian marriages are arranged by the parents. In this land, as everywhere else, flirtation is an amusing pastime while it lasts, but somehow the Serbs, despite their pagan love of pleasure, seldom allow their passions to run amok, and their love episodes rarely terminate in unhappy results. When a young man and a girl develop a partiality for one another they break, like the birds, into song and summon all the sweet, bright things in nature to their assistance. The sun, the moon, and the stars, the wind and trees and flowers are called on to lend their aid, and there is something very quaint in the tender little ditty this youth is singing, in which he declares he will transform his six feet and a half of bone and sinew into a butterfly, so that he can alight upon his lady-love—now seated opposite him on the hearth—who will in her turn be also metamorphosed into a rosebud—

> "Sweetheart, come, and let us kiss each other!
> But O! tell me, where shall be our meeting?
> In this garden, love, or in my garden?
> Under thine, or under mine own rose trees?
> Thou, sweet soul, become thyself a rosebud;
> I then to a butterfly will change me;
> Fluttering I will drop upon the rosebud:
> Folk will think I'm hanging on a flower,
> While a lovely maiden I am kissing."

The great antiquity of all these Southern Slavonic folk songs is proved in the mythological features which occur in them. They are full of stories of talking horses and oxen, of comprehending beasts and birds. For example, in one old song, the mighty Marko's horse is described as shedding tears over his dying master. Life is given to even the most inanimate objects by these imaginative people. A boy, in one popular folk song, begs a thorny rosebush to catch and hold the skirt of his bashful sweetheart that he may get a chance to kiss her, and, in another, a maiden proclaims herself fairer than the Sun, whereupon the Sun becomes angry and resorts to vindictive reprisals. Everywhere throughout the national literature, dumb nature is gifted with speech and life. The Morning Star and the Moon are depicted as conversing together—

> "To the Morning Star, the Moon spake chidingly:
> 'Morning Star, say, where hast thou been wandering, and where lingering?'
> Where hast thou these three, full, white days been lingering?

"To the Moon the Morning Star has answered :
'I've been wandering, I've three days been lingering,
O'er the white walls of the fortress Belgrad,
Gazing there on strange events and wonders—— "

And continuing, the Moon informs the Star what were these events and wonders.

Serbian dances, and for that matter all the dances of the Slavonic race, date from pagan times. To the Serbs the poetry of graceful movement comes naturally. Their forefathers were wont to display their joy and gratitude for victory in dances, performed before the altars of their heathen gods. To-day the same ancient and beautiful dances are performed on the Christian festivals. And here, again, in these dances paganism and Christianity intermingle.

The oldest of the Serbian national dances is, probably, the *Horo*, a war dance in which only men take a part. As the *Kolo* comes to an end on the customary high-pitched note, and to the usual accompaniment of wild cries and beating of hands, two athletic young men push the panting, breathless company back against the walls, and swagger forward into the cleared place. They have laid aside their sheepskins and stand out in the full glare of the blazing log fire and the many candles, as magnificent a pair of men as Europe can produce. Well over six feet in stature, broad-shouldered, muscular, lithe as panthers, their naturally fair skins bronzed almost to the hue of copper, in their white, scarlet, silver-decked garments, their belts an arsenal of gleaming weapons, they recall the vision of Sophocles and his troop of boy musicians dancing the pæan on the seashore around their heaped-up spoils of war, after the victory of Salamis. Dances such as these have come down from an age which did not regard dancing as a mere spectacle, from an age that worshipped and cultivated physical perfection. The *Horo* is unaccompanied by instrumental music, the time being accentuated by the spectators who sit watching every movement of the dancers, and who keep up a weird sort of half-angry, half-triumphant chant, interpersed at intervals, by sharp cries. The expression of the men as they stand awaiting the right moment to begin is stern to cruelty. Suddenly, giving vent to a hoarse shout, brandishing their rifles above their heads in their right hands, and grasping their knives in their left they dash towards one another, meet and spring high like wild cats into air, coming down again with a soft thud on their padded, sandalled feet. Again and again they repeat the movement, leap and descend with the same dull thud, and between whiles, stepping high on their toes they circle round and round each other, sometimes

singing, sometimes yelling, sometimes laughing, darting all the time wrathful side glances at each other as would gladiators one of whom must die. Clashing their knives, against their rifles, shouting, leaping, crouching, stalking, advancing, retreating, they gradually work themselves and the spectators into the highest pitch of violent excitement, until, from absolute mental and physical exhaustion, both dancers and onlookers collapse, and the *Horo* finishes as unexpectedly as it commenced.

Amidst the handclapping and clinking of glasses the warriors wipe their perspiring faces on their sleeves, replace their daggers in their belts, stand their rifles in the corner and resume their seats on the bench, while the dark-browed, half-naked Tsiganes again take up their instruments, and again the passionate sadness, the love and rapture of the gipsy music steals along and silences the uproar. As the wild, savage, almost whispered wail of the violins creeps through the hot air some of the younger women glide forward into the room and take their stand in two rows facing one another. Holding their arms stiffly and closely against their sides in the attitude of Egyptian mummies, they pause for a minute rocking to and fro on their supple feet, and then, bringing their palms together above their heads in a loud clap, they link arms and form into a circle, half of the dancers facing, while the other half turn their backs on the company. This is "the women's dance," and it is well named, for in movement and gesture it is as voluptuous, as alluring and feminine as the preceding dance was virile and rough. With circling, swaying, swinging bodies the performers whirl around in time to the rhythm of the barbaric music, and as this increases in speed one couple after another bounds, with the lightness and agility of antelopes, into the midst of the moving circle, fling their arms about each other's necks, kiss one another on the forehead, and return, with another leap, into the ring. Again a scene reminiscent of classic and pagan times. In their clinging white chemises, brilliant silver-spangled jackets and classical footgear, they are so many reincarnations of the Virgins of the Panathenæa, who, in just such white garments, holding hands in this very same fashion once glided and bounded through the mazes of the Megarian dance. Enchanting, seductive, in every twist and turn of their strong—perhaps—if there be a fault—too muscular limbs these women still possess the ancient and, nowadays rare, talent of being able to express in movement the beauty and mystery of the body. The candles flicker in the breeze caused by the flying white draperies, tinged rosy red by the fierce firelight, the tobacco fumes hang in a blue cloud between the floor and the roof, and through it the faces of the onlookers appear like so

many intangible white blots against the outlying shadows. The Tsiganes laugh, their teeth flash and they bend their black shock heads yet lower over their violins, to fling them upwards again, as the melody changes into a strange and weird *gilli*.* The women's dance has ended, the whirling, twirling, swirling figures seem, all at once, to crumple up and vanish as a dream—a dream from bygone centuries when the world was younger.

* A *gilli* is a gipsy song, always improvised at the moment.

CHAPTER XV

SARAJEVO : THE CITY OF THE GREAT WAR

(June 29th and 30th, 1914)

It is night—a June night. A night of sapphire skies and silvery stars. A night to be had in remembrance so long as the world lasts.

In the Franz Josefsgasse the luxurious, up-to-date hotels and clubs, the handsome theatres, glittering coffee-houses and shops are ablaze with light and brimful of life and activity, and an atmosphere of well-bred excitement predominates, for to-morrow the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Heir to the Hapsburg throne, is to visit the city. With the sundown call of the bugles from the citadel, and from the plains beyond the Miljacka, most of the lofty, tulip-hued turbans and barbaric sheepskin hats have vanished from the haunts of beauty and fashion, and been swallowed up in the mysterious shadows of the old town which lies at the farthermost end of the noisy, flashy boulevard named after the Emperor who has been the principal factor in bringing Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Teutonic yoke. It is night, and from six p.m. onwards the ruling Austrian element is accustomed to take the air, and very strong is the objection to breathe it in company with the native population. Hence the disappearance of the happily coloured turbans and barbaric sheepskin hats, and the annexation of the *cafés*, restaurants and places of amusement by those in authority. Vienna on the Miljacka does not tolerate Sarajevo—the Slavic Sarajevo—on the Miljacka. To be sure there is no hard and fast law that forbids the softly treading, softly mannered, Serbian-speaking inhabitants from frequenting the eating-houses, band promenades and other public *rendezvous* patronized by the Austrians and Hungarians ; there is no Imperial decree prohibiting the Bosnians from flaunting themselves alongside their German masters. But the Slavs are a proud race whether they be Christians or Mahommedans, and bitterly do they resent the coldly contemptuous stares of the blue or brown-coated, white-gloved, sword-clanking "*Herren*

Offizieren" and the scornful glances of the fair-haired elegantly clad *fraus*. Slavs and Teutons have nothing in common. They hate one another by instinct, and with a deadly hatred here as in Poland, here as in Bohemia, here as in Croatia, here as all the wide world over. During business hours, owing to circumstances over which the Slavs have no control, the two peoples are obliged to come into contact; but at this hour, when pleasure is the only thing that has to be considered, both races prefer to enjoy themselves apart. And to-night, as every night, at the spot where the Franz Josefsgasse enters what is left of old Bosnia-Serai a great gulf is fixed, across which the two civilizations glare one at the other. On the Teutonic side of the gulf those who have strolled along the streets of Vienna, might fancy themselves there again, they might forget that at the end of this Franz Josefsgasse a mosque and Islam, and not St. Stefhan's and Catholicism, points the way to paradise. The same swirling, swarming, responsibility-shirking, ebbing and flowing tide of human life, the same mechanical uniformity, the same *Gemuthlichkeit*, the same neat and not unfrequently pretentious and beautiful buildings characterize the modern quarter of Sarajevo as characterize the fashionable thoroughfares of the Hapsburg capital. The same Austrian paternal despotism is likewise noticeable, and those who hope to discover interesting and old-world Serbian memories in the Teutonized portions of Sarajevo will be sorely disappointed. "*Mon Dieu, j'ai demandé des hommes, et l'on m'envoie des Allemands!*" exclaimed the blunt and somewhat impolite Voltaire, as though anticipating the world's opinion to-day, when, on a certain occasion, the Prussian soldiers at Berlin were not performing their evolutions exactly according to his *beau idéal*. And all who look for Slavonic society in and around the new portion of the Bosnian metropolis will undoubtedly understand the great philosopher's chagrin.

"*Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser,*
Unsern guten Kaiser Franz!"

The Austrian national anthem is stealing out from a dozen open air *cafés* and *Bierhallen*. And mingling with its semi-devotional strains rises the music of a Strauss waltz, passionate, impatient and mocking. The chairs round the tables on the pavements, under the *café* awnings, are all occupied, and the Austrian usurpers are imbibing the contents of their beer glasses and their "*Neue Freie Presse*," or "*Die Gegenwart*" or "*Die Hilfe*," or "*Jugend*," previous to tucking their napkins beneath their chins and setting-to in earnest on the *Abendmahl*. The menus are printed in German, the "*Zahlkellners*" those waiters,

who do little save extract their " tips " are Austrians, the indiscreet toilettes are typically Viennese, as is also the broad, open, easy, slow dialect spoken, and the bland indifference to anything except amusement and the good things of life that is stamped upon each visage and seems to say, " *Etwas lustiges dafür !* " * There is nothing here that travellers have not seen a hundred times in Austria itself. Nothing to be discovered in and around the smug precincts of the Franz Josefsgasse, differing from the usual Austrian life : not even to-night when it is *en fête* in honour of the strange silent man who, one day, will become Emperor of the " patchwork quilt " inheritance of the Hapsburgs.

For interest, for beauty, for the real life of Sarajevo one must look elsewhere, across the racial gulf at the distant end of the big, new, glittering street, in the old *Čaršija* (bazaar), in the shadowy, tranquil gardens of the hundred and one mosques, on the steep hillsides rising from the river banks, where, undisturbed and secure, in little whitewashed, latticed windowed Oriental houses, the Bosnian Mahommedan population preserve the privacy of their home life.

Break away from the glitter and jangle of the modern locality —who would pass such a night amid such surroundings ?—and betake yourself where people and things are possessed of personality, where individuality has not been crushed, where through the exquisite purple star-spangled night the perfumes and sounds and sights of the East—or of the South, for here both intermingle —are free to charm, where Serbian voices rise in old-world melodies, where the crushed but still encouraged Slav race has crept like a wounded animal to escape its enemies.

One of the prettiest spots in the Slavonic quarter is the *Bend-bâsi*. Just as the Franz Josefsgasse is the centre of the Germanic coffee-houses, so is this the centre of the native coffee-houses. The way to the *Bend-bâsi*, where it lies near the river, overlooked by towering cliffs under the shadow of the castle and the fortifications is through crooked tumble-down byways, where nothing has changed very much since the heroic age—hundreds of years ago—of Sokolovic and Zlatarovic,† or the days of Khosrev Pasha, the first Vizier of Bosnia. He it was who built the wall round the town and from his time it became known as Bosna-Serai—the word Serai signifying a fortress, which fortress stood then, as now, upon the hill. And from the same word Serai, the Slavs named the city Sarajevo. Probably many of the houses

* " Give me something merry."

† Sokolovic and Zlatarovic, the two Bosnian Slav magnates who are said to have been the first Christians in the country to become perverted to Islâm.

along these poor streets were here when Blunt, an English traveller who lived in the sixteenth century, entered "Saraih with the Bashaw of Bosnah," and found the town "meanly built and not great," with "about four score Mescheetoes and twenty thousand houses." And if they were here in Blunt's day, so they must have been in the year 1697, when Prince Eugene held Bosnia for the short space of twenty days and was sorely chagrined on finding Sarajevo so strongly fortified as to render his position in the country untenable.

Every turning brings back to memory also the story of those terrible Janissaries, who in the long-ago flaunted their lordly, defiant, green and gold turbans, and vaunted their Slavonic Mahommedan rights and liberties under the noses of the angry and impotent Vizier and his master, the Sultan of Constantinople. They are full of memories and ghosts, these queer streets, and though without electric lighting, are to-night as clear as day under the shining stars, except where the mouth of some deep archway, or some cut-throat alley, which can be spanned with the hands, makes a black blot through the transparent bluish dusk. At midday the thoroughfares leading to the *Bend-bâsi* are crowded with life, and hundreds of strange folk pass and repass, moving deliberately with the dignity, which, natural to all Slavs, has, with Bosnians, become even more noticeable from their long contact with the stately Turks. At this late hour most of the citizens, and those who dwell with them, Montenegrins, Poles, Czechs, Dalmatians, Croats, and Slovenes, have either betaken themselves indoors, or else gone off to seek fresh air beyond the town. Now and then the hum of soft voices, the faint tinkle of zithers, a broken snatch of song, or a ripple of mischievous laughter is wafted out into the warm summer air, and sometimes, but not often, the screens are cautiously pushed an inch or so open and shadows flit to and fro across the bars. But not so much as a gleam of dark eyes or a hint of feminine loveliness is forthcoming, for the Mahommedan ladies of Bosnia are very virtuous.

In the neighbourhood of the Franz Josefsgasse streamers are floating everywhere, and the Austrian Flag is displayed on the public buildings; but in the real Sarajevo there are no decorations, and the banner of the overlord is conspicuous by its absence. It appears rather as if the Bosnians were quietly and without undue rudeness determined to ignore the advance of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. That he was credited with pro-Slav opinions, that he had married a Slav wife, are facts the good folk of Sarajevo do not deny, but that, next to his uncle, the Emperor Franz Joseph, he had been instrumental in robbing them of their racial

freedom is a fact still more remembered. There has not been the slightest outward show of Slavonic resentment; indeed the Bosnian press has published stilted and chilly editorials of welcome. Only the "*Narod*" has been daring enough to omit any reference to the Imperial visit, to border its leaves with the Serbian colours, and to write an impassioned description of the Serbian Sedan—the Battle of Kóssovo. Yet, somehow an indescribable feeling comes over one that these byways of the old city are deserted to-night with a purpose. However this may be, it is too peaceful, too perfect a night to waste thought on politics or racial animosities, and the chief *café* of the *Bend-bási* is now in view. At a curve in the river where it narrows into a gorge, protected behind by the great precipice, and looking across the stream to where the nearer mountains, crowned by slender minarets, rise against a background of their more gigantic and distant companions, is a garden, a *café* garden, where it is quite possible to fancy the serpent has never entered. Acacia trees cast sombre shadows on the little paths, and their scented feathery blossoms gleam palely. From trellises the vines droop downwards and are stirred softly by the breeze coming up from the river, whose name translated into English is "The Gently Whispering." There are roses, of course, masses and banks of roses, red, white, pink, and creamy roses, such as bloom in the pages of the "Arabian Nights." There are giant bushes, too, of heliotrope, and stocks, lilies, and camellias. Fireflies flit from flower to flower, sleepy swallows twitter and rustle, nightingales keep up a ceaseless jug-jugging in the thick foliage, and the water laps coaxingly against the tall piles upon which the largest of the many small wooden huts that comprise the *café* is built. Mingled with a thousand other delightful odours is the clean, fresh smell of basilica, and newly-turned earth, and from the fragrance of an Eastern dream, one suddenly awakens to reality, and the pleasant discovery that this garden is tangible, and the dark face surmounted by the crimson fez and relieved by two rows of dazzling teeth, which is so closely and earnestly peering into one's own, belongs not to the genius of a dream garden, but to an ordinary Bosnian waiter in the most lovely *café* garden of Sarajevo.

At most of the small tables within and without the wooden huts, or summer-houses, people are seated, looking as if they intended to remain there for the remainder of the night. Under the lamplight the red fezzes, silken turbans, gorgeously embroidered, sleeveless jackets, many-coloured sashes, and voluminous crimson breeches, proclaim the nearest group to be Bosnians. At the next table some long-haired pale-faced, black-coated Poles are engaged in a heated argument. Both Bosnians and Poles

speak a language derived from the same mother tongue; yet neither can understand a single word of the other's dialect. Two stately Montenegrin gentlemen are smoking placidly a few yards away, arrayed in the full glory of their national dress. On their heads is a tiny black cloth cap, set into the crown is a red piece of cloth embroidered with golden letters. H stands in the Cyrillic lettering for the Latin letter N, *i.e.* for Nicholas I., the present King of Montenegró. The black is worn as mourning for the defeat of the Serbian race at Kóssovo, the red is worn in memory of the blood the Serbs shed there, and the gold in the lettering signifies the hope cherished by all the Serbian people that the day is not far distant when their racial liberty shall be established. And, seeing these gold, red, and black caps one recalls the morning's editorial in the "*Narod*," relating the oft-told tale of Kóssovo. Beyond the Montenegrins a party of Jews are carrying on an animated conversation in Spanish. The Jews of Bosnia are named "Spagnols." They are descendants of the Jewish refugees who fled from Spain in the sixteenth century to escape the horrors of the Inquisition under Philip II.

They are immensely the superiors in looks and manners of the Jews of Central and Northern Europe, and still speak the curious old Spanish tongue that their forefathers spoke, though they generally prefer to write in Hebrew. Evidently ladies do not greatly patronize the *cafés* in the native quarter—the only women present being a couple of Bosnian Christians who are flirting outrageously with a stout personage of middle age, wearing a frock coat, and a fez much too small for his round bullet-shaped head. In all probability he belongs to the shrewd and not over-popular community of local Christian merchants; for the rings on his podgy fingers, like the diamond studs in his bulging shirt front, advertise wealth. His companions have possibly not much character to lose, else they would scarcely be here without a chaperon, for in the Musselman quarter Sarajevo is decidedly not a town where Christian female liberty can walk hand in hand with female respectability. Like their escort, these Bosnian fair ones are fat, and to be fat with the Bosnians is to be beautiful.

In fact, the native word *pretyla*, which means fat, is also used for beautiful! Their race is shown in the shape of their faces, the setting of their eyes, the tint of their complexions, but the East has set its mark upon them. There is something Oriental in the languorous sensuous expression of their artificially-shaded eyes, in the full pout of their over-carmined lips, and in their gestures. Provo-Slavs though they be, a strain of Turkish blood has robbed their Slav blood of its purity. Strange and

very picturesque is their costume, consisting of a white linen tunic woven over what at first looks like a dark silken petticoat, but eventually proves to be a wide pair of pantaloons! Above this tunic is the customary sleeveless jacket, or bolero of crimson and blue velvet, embroidered in every imaginable hue, heavy with silver discs and braiding. Confining the tunic in place is a magnificently wrought, weighty silver belt, at least seven inches broad, and thirty-six or thirty-seven in circumference. Each of the girls seems possessed of extraordinary luxuriant tresses reaching far below her knees. Doubtless their hair is finer than most, for they are Slavs, but close inspection might result in the discovery of long strands of black silk amongst these same tresses, that are made yet more conspicuous by being interwoven with any number of golden coins. Their girlish squealing and squeaking and laughter at last becomes altogether too much for a pair of aged and benevolent Mohammedans, seated within earshot, who betake themselves, their coffee-cups and *tchibouques* to the farthermost recess of one of the huts, there to ruminate on the disgusting customs of Christians in general, and of Provo-Slav Christians in particular. It is a pity they have gone, for their hawk-featured brown faces, surmounted by pompous white turbans, their spare figures, clad in red-brown vests, flowing crimson trousers, and bright, silken sashes, are very much part of the picture, more so than is an adjoining group of Bosnian infantry officers who serve the enemy, and yet, so far as their uniforms—red fezzes, blue tunics, and baggy trousers—are concerned, still cling to their homeland.

No German newspapers litter the tables. Those that are supplied are printed in the Cyrillic characters, and are unintelligible to the average stranger, and German is not spoken, though it is understood.

The refreshments partaken of in such a coffee-house as this are of the lightest description. Should a solid meal be required it is ordered beforehand, and at only one table—that occupied by the Jews—is there a substantial supper, a supper dear to the souls of Bosnians, consisting of thick, highly-flavoured, greasy soup, chicken stewed with rice and garlic, sour curds, small gourds stuffed with mincemeat, and delectable sweets, washed down by very acid red wine and *raki*. Nearly all the other customers are sipping weak lemonade, sugar and fruit *sirops*, or black coffee served in infinitesimal, oddly shaped, lidless copper pots. One of the few quite perfect things in this world of imperfections is the coffee brewed in Bosnian Sarajevo. If asked, the makers of it assure one that the recipe is simple—a few red-hot embers burning between two bricks, a vessel of freshly boiling

water, some spoonfuls of newly-roasted and ground coffee, on which to pour the water the moment it comes to the boil, a few minutes tranquillity on the red embers, till the creamy froth rises to the surface, and—appreciative customers! But, like all master cooks, the Bosnians, though apparently frank, still retain unto themselves the innermost secret of the recipe, and so the *Bend-bâsi* also keeps its many customers. Beside each coffee-pot is set a copper tray holding a dainty cup and a bowl of sugar, and the pot contains sufficient coffee to allow of this cup being oft replenished. Thus, for the spending of one penny—English money—the best coffee ever tasted can here be drunk.

The people do not hustle or fuss. The calm and leisure of the East broods over the place, and the stealthily-moving, smiling attendants do not appear as if they thought only of the getting of tips.

By-and-by there is music—sad, plaintive music. Between the rose bushes and the oleanders the musicians can be seen, crouching over their *guzlés* and pipes. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, as in Serbia and Croatia, the *guzlé* and *svirala* * are the favourite instruments, and though primitive enough to be relics of Arcady, most marvellously sweet notes can be extracted from out the three poor horsehair strings and the Pan-like pipes. Also the same curious metre is used as in all the other Southern Slav lands, where the East meets and blends with the West, and where music, philosophy, religion, and life appear on early acquaintance to be filled full with joyous brightness, but, when better understood, are found to be indescribably melancholy. It is a dance they are playing, one of those haunting, monotonous, characteristic melodies of the race that has danced through long centuries of suffering. Hearing this music for the first time one asks oneself in amazement how such dolorous strains could possibly have originated; and, still more, how any one can possibly have the heart to dance to them. Then one of the band commences to chant a love song. His beautiful tenor rings through the slumberous silence, floats and dies away on a high note at the end of the first verse, and the second part is caught up by one of his companions whose deeper voice swells and rolls and beats out the rhythm, laying the characteristic long stress on the final trochee. It is all about a lovely lady whose black eyes "resemble leeches from the well," and whose cheeks are like the dawn, for whose dear sake her lover is prepared to give his heart and two thousand golden coins!

The fates, or rather, musicians, seem to have chosen a particularly Slavonic and Serbian musical programme for to-night.

* Resembling a zither and a kind of flute.

Have they done so purposely, in order to remind those who need no reminding that their nation is in bondage? Who knows? These Slavs are apt to think more than they speak. But it is certainly remarkable that, on the eve of the Imperial visit, the band of the principal Slavonic *café* should—like the "*Narod*"—select for one of its items a Serbian ballad, or "*Taborie*," of interminable length, relating how Tzar Dushan, in the days of Serbia's glory, went up at the head of his army against the capital of the Cæsars, of how their great and good Lazar fell on the plains of Kóssovo, of how the "King's Son, Marko," defied his enemies, of, in fact, all those mighty historical and heroic deeds, the mere mention of which is sufficient to make the Mahommedan of Bosnia recognize as a brother the man of the Black Mountain, to make the Croat hail as kinsman the Serb of Belgrad, to make creeds and natural barriers and frontiers and diplomacy disappear, to make the Teuton tremble lest from the Danube to the Adriatic, from the White to the Black Sea, the Slav race may unite to share in the memories of its glorious past, and in the hopes of a yet more glorious future.

The spirit of Tavor, the old Slav war god, is surely hovering near by this midnight. A mysterious unrest can be felt stirring beneath the pleasant sweetness and stillness. Some students have entered the garden and settled themselves round a couple of tables drawn close together. Only their fez head-coverings show them to be Serbs or Bosnians; but for these they might pass as shabby scholars of some small English clerical college. Poverty and defiant unconventionality flaunts from the frayed seams of their black coats and the downtrodden heels of their footgear. But there is none of the careless inconsequent youthfulness which animates the British student, however poor, about these boys. Though the eldest amongst them can scarcely be more than nineteen they give one the impression of being much older. The hard struggle to make ends meet—for in the Slav countries a student is, generally speaking, a pauper—continual brooding over racial problems, that seem beyond the power of European diplomatists to solve, continual dwelling upon the wrongs and insults of their people: all this has taken the freshness from their faces and hearts and minds and has turned them into embittered men—into fanatics. One of the company pulls out a much-thumbed pack of cards and commences to deal. A lamp hung overhead in the trees sheds its light on a face pale to lividness, on black eyes that glow and burn, on a weak mouth, to which a cigarette end is stuck, and behind which the white, glistening teeth are clenched. He laughs, jerks his head in the direction of the musicians, pushes back the cards, says something

in an undertone to his neighbour, and, rising from the table, stalks off alone into the deep shadows. His friends glance after him, shrug their shoulders, and beckon to the waiter for coffee and *raika*. Their companion's erratic mood is evidently understood, and without further ado they abandon him to the shadows, give up the game, and devote themselves to conversation and the refreshments, and all the while the fierce, provocative music plays upon the emotions, all the while the wonderful story of the past thrills the heart and quickens the memory.

* * * * * *

Hour after hour goes by. The stars glitter less brightly in the purple sky as it slowly turns to violet, then to a soft greyness; and the greyness becomes a luminous white which swallows up the stars. A bird begins to warble amongst the acacia blooms and is answered by its mate from the rose bushes. The whiteness turns to a tender blue, the blue to green, the green to pink, and the pink deepens and deepens to a radiant crimson until, suddenly, the mighty, golden sun leaps up over the mountains and—the day has dawned!

Off the road winding round the base of the cliff on the right bank of the gorge there is a path leading directly up to the open space in front of the Citadel. Standing under the ancient walls and bastions, at a height of five hundred feet above the bed of the "gently whispering" waters one can watch the milk-white mists, tipped here and there with rose, floating away across the five thousand feet soaring crest of Trebević. The clouds have trailed away by this time and over to the westwards the gloomy slopes of Izman glint and sparkle in the sunlight, whilst behind them again the towering, snow-capped peaks of the Bjelasnica—the "white mountains"—flash through the blueness of the sky. Well did the Turks name Sarajevo, "The Damascus of the North!" The panorama that opens below and above and around is so wonderful that it is beyond description.

In a tossing sea of pine-surrounded, limestone-terraced and dazzling crowned mountains, lies the city with its quaint, fantastic, white and black houses and villas, its high-walled, dewy rose gardens, its sombre cypress groves, its two hundred mosque domes and cupolas, its lofty hundred and thirty fairy, slender, lancing, glancing minarets, from which five times a day can be heard the voice of the Muezzin calling the faithful to prayer; with its Catholic and Serb Cathedrals and the laughing river running like a silver ribbon through its centre. The Teutons of the Franz Josefsgasse, have done their best to Teutonize Bosnia and its capital. They have built an ugly stone quay on either bank of the Miljacka, they have attempted to convert and

tame its "gently whispering" waters into a hideous canal. They have swept away many of the dreamy, Oriental gardens that were planted centuries ago along the right bank of the gorge, by the beauty-loving Turkish invaders, and they have erected on these garden sites rows upon rows of extremely prosaic, modern dwelling-houses. But all this vandalism is lost sight of and forgotten up on the heights whence it is possible to look down and around and view the world, and its people and its things from a distance.

It is quite two hours since, at the first streak of dawn, the sharp cries of the Muezzins awoke the faithful to prayer, since the first liquid bird note was answered by the sunrise invocations to "Allah—who alone is great," since the deep sonorous bell * of the Cathedral of the Eastern Faith and its brother of the Western, bade the Christians to arise and greet the Light, since the bugles sounded the *réveillé* from the Sarajevsko Plain, since the shepherds on the mountain slopes, rubbing their sleepy eyes, arose to lead their flocks to pasture, since the peasants of the valleys left their beds and came out to yoke the white oxen to the rude carts, and since the hum of human life began to ascend from the *Čaršija*.

A queer old place is this *Čaršija*, in the early morning, and especially to-day. For, like birds of prey, that have sniffed the battle from afar, every wandering pedlar, Jew, *Tzigane*, and *Tzintzar* † in the country is foregathered to see what business can be done amongst the strangers who have come to the city in the van of the Imperial Visitors and their suite.

* It is only very recently that the bells of the Christians' churches were permitted to ring in Sarajevo. The Mahommedan community deeply resented the "infidel clangour," and feared the noise might drown the prayers of the Muezzins on the Minarets. And even the Christians of the City cherished a curious distaste for the sound of church bells, a distaste that originated doubtless in the prejudice that led their Bogomilian ancestors to hear in church bells the "Devil's trumpet call." And consequently, wooden clappers were placed in the steeples of the Christian churches which were in use up to the last few years.

† The *Tzintzars*, also known as the *Kutzo-Valaks*, *Lame-Valaks*, or Macedonians, are of the same blood as the Roumanian people. Like the Jews they have been dispersed throughout the East, have as good business qualities and are much cleaner, more amiable and more honest. The best masons in the Balkans are *Tzintzars*, and very many of the best jewellers. Of all the nations in the Peninsula the *Tzintzars* are most devoted to the Greeks and they are followers of the Oriental Church. There can be little doubt the modern *Tzintzars* are descendants of the *Valaks* who, long ago, lived with their flocks on the mountain upland of Greece, Thrace and Albania. They are a very lovable people, very moral, very honest, very law-abiding, and they never fail to adapt themselves to the customs of the countries in which they settle. It is to be regretted that they are so few in number.

The Austrian-built *Rathhaus*, erected on the site of a green where formerly the wood market was held, is Moorish in style, and above it floats the banner of Bosnia's conqueror. It is a fine enough building in its way, but looks exceedingly incongruous set in the midst of the clustering little native houses, and, in spite of its Oriental pretensions only succeeds in accentuating one's feelings of resentment against the German aggressors. But in the *Čaršija*, as it has been said, there are no jarring incongruities. All is in keeping, from the *Begora Mosque*,* with its magnificent and arched mosaic-inlaid arcade—the legacy left by Usruf Bey to the city he besieged in the fifteenth century—down to the queer wooden clogs on the bare rosy feet of the baby daughters of Islam. It is, however, in the crowds that populate the *Čaršija* rather than its buildings that interest centres. No wheeled traffic is permitted to enter the narrow, winding streets, courts, and passages of the bazaar, and the countless country ox-waggons † that have rumbled, rolled, creaked and wailed along the old-world roads and bridges, straight out of classic times, are all ranged up at the outside edge of the town by their owners. It was Bonaparte who declared that "The market-place is the Louvre of the People"; and certainly the *Čaršija* may be regarded as such. Although the ear is spared the piercing, grinding noise of the ox-cart wheels that set the teeth on edge in every other market square of Slavdom, the din and clatter are distracting.

In an open space in the centre of the native market is a curious wooden fountain, built round with steps, that are now swarming with people come to enjoy a morning drink, or carry away big, long-necked, gaily-coloured pitchers—"*testjas*"—of the pure water. In these "*testjas*" the oneness of the Slav race is shown as well as in the racial blue bead necklaces worn by the women, for these earthen vessels of the Bosnians differ in nothing from the pitchers used by the Serbs, the Slovenes, and the Slovaks, by every Slav tribe and nation from the Adriatic, to the Russian frontier, from Sarajevo to the Carpathians. In Bulgaria, too, in Roumania, on the shores of the Black Sea, wherever the

* This mosque is the largest and handsomest in Sarajevo. The Ottoman General, who conquered Bosnia in the fifteenth century, spent untold money in rendering it beautiful, and succeeded so well that many critics assert it to be superior to even the finest of the mosques of Constantinople. Usruf Bey and his wife are interred in a small temple adjoining the mosque.

† These waggons are the same as those used by the Serbs, by the Croats and Slovenes, by, in fact, all the Slav peoples of South Eastern Europe and even by the people of Slavonic blood, in Germanized Central Europe and far into Russia.

Slavonic peoples have settled there are the same beautifully-formed, beautifully-tinted pitchers, cups and bowls. Originally the "*testjas*" undoubtedly came to the scattered Slavs from a common source—the Byzantine Empire; and excavations made throughout the Slav lands of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe bring to light pottery identical in shape and colouring to these that are now being filled at the old fountain of the *Čaršija*. All Mahommedans and all Slavs love fountains, and the steps round the well are a favourite rendezvous. Here scores of fezzed, or blue and ruby-turbaned, crimson-pantalooned, silver-belted Bosnians of gigantic stature, pace majestically to and fro with long tin or brass trays poised on their shoulders, whereon are spread small, flat loaves and pasties. Moving amongst them are the lemonade vendors. Over sweet is the concoction known here as lemonade! In an adjoining doorway may be seen the braziers in which the water is boiled, that forms the chief ingredient in the yellow and green beverage, and the small wooden instruments, locally known by the name "*didlideilshek*," which are employed to induce effervescence; with a row of little bottles of plum brandy, which make glad Slav hearts wherever they beat, and it is frequently this fiery brandy that is carried about in the tumblers set in rings in an iron frame girthed to the vendors' waists. Now one meets a German commercial traveller who pauses to analyze the composition, mental and physical, of a savage-looking Albanian shepherd whose untamed eyes are almost hidden by hair as matted and gloomy as his beard. Now attention is drawn to a couple of *beaux sabreurs* of the Austrian garrison, big and swaggering, ogling some veiled ladies in a cool, persevering manner. Naturally these veiled females are interesting; the undiscovered is always attractive. In Sarajevo Mahommedan women may be divided into two classes, namely, those who adopt the *ferediza*, and those who prefer the *dorino*. The *ferediza* is a shapeless, loose black mantle with floppy sleeves that envelops the figure from neck to feet. Over the head and hood of this *ferediza* is cast a shawl of a native soft white cotton fabric which falls far down the back and ends in front at the eyes, where it is brought forward over the forehead in a peak like a bird's beak. Covering the entire face and clinging closely to the features is a thick, white bandage of the same material, with slits in it for the eyes, and through these slits, through the suffocating cotton, the unfortunate female slave to masculine jealousy must both see and breathe. The rival mode is more striking and even uglier. It consists of a check cotton overall—the *dorino*—and is nothing more or less than a huge bag in which the wearer's head, shoulders, arms and body are effectually concealed. Round

what is, supposedly, the waist of imprisoned beauty a string is tightly drawn, and the lower folds of the sack bunch out and terminate about a foot and a half from the ground, leaving the legs and feet free to fascinate by an ample display of gaudily-striped hosiery and scarlet, or blue, heelless slippers that flap at every step. It is a mistake, however, to fancy that the arms and hands are rendered helpless by such confinement; on the contrary, they grasp a brilliantly-hued parasol, and, often a painted fan. The poor creatures of the *ferediza* shuffle and roll along pantingly on this broiling morning, looking like so many elderly parrots. Some have babies in their arms, uncanny little morsels of humanity that scarcely seem to be babies so very ancient and wise is the expression in their big eyes, so extraordinarily developed are their digestive organs, for, though still being "nursed," they are given cucumbers and sweetmeats as "soothers" between meals. The *dorino* garb does not facilitate the carrying of infants, and perhaps, those who wear it are somewhat "advanced" in their opinions. Anyhow, they are making full use of the liberty permitted to their lower extremities, and the stride of their striped legs is as free and determined as the amblings of the *ferediza*-clad are uncertain and servile.

From the fountain square the bazaar opens in two directions, and off these two principal arteries run mazes of narrow lanes and alleys, each of which is monopolized by a particular trade or profession. First there is the street where the copper, silver, and goldsmiths pinch and beat and twist their precious metals into brooches, rings, necklaces, and earrings of filigree work that is of Byzantine design It is a nerve-racking quarter this, so unceasingly and vindictively do the little hammers clank and clamour. But in noisiness it must yield the palm to the neighbouring laneway where the armourers are equally busy fashioning knives and daggers and swords out of finest Bosnian steel, the stocks and hilts of which are frequently inlaid with mother-of-pearl or silver. Opening out of the armourers' quarter is the blacksmiths' alley, given over to the manufacture of quaint door handles, nails, etc. Then comes the haunt of the harness makers; then a passage sacred to the makers of *opankas*; and close by the crockery merchants, where the potters sit haunched up over their graceful *testjas*. Not many yards further on are the workshops of the musical instrument makers—not the brass bugles and bassoons of the German world, but the classic instruments of pagan times, instruments the mere sight of which conjure up visions of the shepherds who sported on the grassy pastures of Hybla, or of Thyrsis and Corydon on the flowery banks of Mincius, of fauns and nymphs and satyrs. Beyond this again the cloth

and embroidery vendors line the kerb. Here it is as if snow had fallen, so white, so light, so bright are the billowy piles of home-spun linens and muslins that bring to mind the name given to the Southern Slavs in the law-books of the great Tzar Dushán : "the dressers in white." Half-buried in this linen snow the needle pliers bend over their frames and paint in silk, cotton, silver and gold threads, the centuries-old patterns used by their forefathers, who were the first to give to the world the art of embroidery, bringing it with them from out Byzantium. Seen from afar this byway appears like an avenue of dew-spangled, red and white geraniums, interspersed with cornflowers. And what ancient pagan memories do the garments they are fashioning not recall ! Look at the brilliant scarf—*pojas*—on this frame, and the scarlet and blue stitched fillet—the *strophion* of the Grecian goddess—on the next, or the rosy veil, or *rubac*, just beginning to glow under the nimble fingers of another embroiderer, and yonder belt of painted, hand-wrought and crimson-tasselled leather, the *remen*, which, like all the rest of these gorgeous vestments, will one day be worn, by some poor, simple peasant, when he drives his herd to market in some out of the way village. Heaped up on stalls set at the rear of the needleworkers' frames are Dalmatian and Bosnian fezzes, the former gold-braided, scarlet and dazzling in the sunlight ; the latter darker and adorned only by a black, silken tassel ; and along with these are scores of the horsehair, silver-fringed bags, without which no self-respecting Southern Slavs would walk abroad, and in which they carry their money, food, playing cards, and flasks of plum brandy. It is difficult to say which is the most colourful, the street of the embroiderers, or the street of the fruiterers and flower sellers, where one is fairly bewildered by the golds and reds and greens of pyramids of melons, peaches, pears, yellow plums, purple figs, strawberries and cherries ; and by a wealth of perfumed blossom of every tint—white warming to cream, paling to snow, delicate rose blushing to crimson, faintest blue darkening to purple.

For background to all this vivid life and colour there are small, low-roofed wooden shops, all open in front, with floors raised some inches from the ground, where, seated cross-legged on the ground, or on low divans, the owners await whatever fortune the day chances to bring, puffing serenely, hour after hour, at their long, Eastern pipes—*tchibouque*—or opium-mingled cigarettes. They are artists and fatalists these Bosnian merchants before they are traders. Enough for the carpet-weaver that his carpets are the perfection of beauty, enough for the goldsmiths and potters that their wares are flawless. If those who happen

to pass are possessed of good taste and good money they will purchase, if they are not so happily circumstanced, well, then they cannot be expected to buy. Meanwhile the sun shines, and they continue to meditate and imbibe small portions of black coffee, which they invariably invite their customers to share. From dawn till the violet and gold rays of the setting sun flash against the minarets, till the call to prayer peals out from the lancing towers, till the nightingales sing amongst the interlaced branches in the Boccaccio gardens behind the crumbling gateways, till then they remain at their seats of custom, and only when night has fallen will they put up their carved shutters and secure them by a padlocked bar.

All things in the *Čaršija* are not beautiful, however, very many are, on the contrary, disgusting and hideous. For example, the drainage and odour therefrom is more than objectionable, as are also the dead rats and cats, the melon rinds and refuse in general that strew the gutters. Here are bazaar dogs which regard one with the listless, indifferent way common to dogs in the East. And in the human line surely hideousness has reached its zenith in the persons of the foreign Jews who, for the most part, hail from the German frontiers, and are as dirty, undersized and mean in appearance as the local Israelites of Spanish descent are handsome and agreeable. But at any rate the German Jews still retain at least some of the attributes of humanity which have been almost entirely lost by the leprous beggars who every morning crawl from their dens in the Tsharshija—the native quarter infested by those afflicted with this fearful disease—to where the shadows lie in violet patches round the *Begova Mosque* where they beg for alms, or sell small packets of grey powder, pulverized mummy dust, which is believed to be a certain cure for cancer. Here they are soothed by the droning chants of the Mahommedan students who, bunched up on rush mats in the cool of the Mosque Arcades, are engrossed in the study of the Koran and its God. Allah, with the Mahommedans beyond Bosnia, is a high, stupendous Being, an autocrat to be propitiated, sternly remote, yet swayed by very human passions. He is, indeed, merely an exaggerated edition of themselves. But with the Slav Mahommedans, whose ancestors were Christians, and who are by nature mystics, Allah is a God of Mystery, whose chief attribute is love! So perchance, it is to implore a share in Allah's eternal love as much as to beg alms that the lepers creep to the wall of His temple to the shadowy protection of the holy place of the *Čaršija*.

There are no less than fifty-five streets in the Sarajevo bazaar, and threading a way in and out through them long strings of

donkeys and pack mules come and go; and confusion is often worse confounded when at a corner two trains of these beasts of burden coming in different directions meet and are rushed together *pêle-mêle* by their drivers who, with most unearthly noises, whirl their sticks and raise clouds of choking dust. Just now a more serious collision than usual has occurred at the spot where the short alley, inhabited by the *opanka* makers, turns sharply into the passage devoted to the manufacture of pottery. At this point a little charcoal fire is accustomed to burn, over which an immense pot of maize and fat sends out a strong, if rather unpleasant, odour. Daily in front of this pot, a goodly row of turbaned diners squat in hopeful anticipation. But to-day the turbaned gentlemen's expectations of a meal are ruthlessly dashed by the entrance into the stew-pan of a large delinquent ass, the leader of a train of twenty, who irritated by the music of some *guslárs*, kicks up his heels, snorts and, along with his companions, bolts straight into an advancing cavalcade of refractory pack mules, with the result that not only is the maize stew-pot overthrown, but likewise a low table, a few paces removed, at which three grave-eyed, long-bearded, dignified personages are enjoying a repast of boiled milk containing inch-cubes of mutton, of honey and fat bread cakes. The mule owners, fat old Bosnian farmers, mounted on the foremost beasts had been lolloping along at the easy pace usual in this never, never hurry country, mentally employed in counting up the morning's plunder, plunge and wriggle out of their saddles with looks of horror and dismay, and, making a rush into a pottery booth, await events. The donkey drivers do likewise, and the beasts are left to carry destruction wherever the spirit moves them. Amid the crashing of breaking *testjas*, the rattle of pots and pans, the frenzied cries of the onlookers, both asses and mules career madly up the street, and heaven only knows when or where they will meet with a check. But no sooner have hoofs clattered away, no sooner has the last and stoutest mule and donkey driver disappeared in perspiring pursuit, than life resumes its even tenor. Another pot is set on the brazier, a fresh supply of maize stew is prepared, the turbaned ones slip once more into their former position before the cauldron, muttering, "*Kismet*," and the grave-eyed personages reseat themselves, order coffee, and produce their pipes, exchanging congratulations on the fact that at the moment of the disaster they had already dined heartily. Presently, with a tinkle of copper bells, some bullocks and buffaloes lumber up. They are marked for sale, and will fetch a high price in the cattle-market. Nearly all the draught work in Bosnia is done by bullocks and the ground is ploughed

by them. They are excellently suited by temperament to a people who loathe haste. Nevertheless the buffaloes are even more valued. Most well-to-do Bosnians have a drove of these huge, black, fierce-looking, long-horned animals, whose ferocious appearance greatly belies them, for of all the animals subject to man they are most docile. Moreover, they are much stronger and more willing than the bullocks, who are given to sulking when tired or hungry. Nothing is without drawbacks, however, and unlike the bullocks, buffaloes demand a certain amount of care. During mid-winter they suffer severely from cold and have to be covered with sacking and shut up at night in warm stables; and in the dog days they are miserable when out of the water. Their hides, too, generally crack under a burning sun, and have to be anointed with mud. Those who know not the buffaloes and their ways will soon discover that it is most unwise when taking an airing on a scorching day behind them to venture in the vicinity of water, for, of a surety, they will break into a trot, then into a charge which there will be no stopping; and, eventually, they, the cart and its occupants will be swimming, sinking, or wallowing in the nearest morass, pond, or river. With their scarlet tassels tossing and their blue bead necklaces—the charm against the "Evil Eye"—and bells tinkling against their sleek black or white necks, the patient brutes go on their way, and are followed by half a dozen native horses, underbred, misshapen little animals, who get through any amount of work, worry nobody, and manage, somehow or other, to feed themselves, increase and multiply, perfectly indifferent to cold or heat, on either the unsheltered plains or mountain slopes.

It is difficult to know why the *Čaršija* should be so noisy, for the Bosnians—especially the Mahommedans—are a people of few words; and they tread softly in their sandalled footgear.

But what an orchestra of odd sounds is here! The jangle of hundreds of bullock-bells, mule-bells, sheep-bells, water-carriers' bells; the chanting calls of the auctioneers who sell everything saleable from a tin bowl to a costly carpet or a string of golden beads, the coaxing admonitions of the buffalo and bullock drivers, the sharp clatter of hoofs, the croning of the beggars, the beat of myriads of hammers, the twanging of many weird instruments.

The sun climbs higher and beats down in a pitiless living fire. The morning is well advanced, for in Sarajevo the day and its toil begin at sunrise, and by nine o'clock most of the best bargains have been struck, and the cream of the markets has been skimmed. It is so insufferably hot, the sun rays have grown so scorching, so piercing that the desire for rest becomes intense. There is a

little unpretentious *café* kept by a kindly old fellow who looks as if he was incapable of hurting a fly, but who, nevertheless, carries on his rotund stomach, stuck in his silken waist scarf, a brace of huge, silver-mounted pistols, a couple of stilettoes, at least two feet long, and, attached to his neck a metal box, containing greased rags for cleaning his armaments, a verse of the Koran, and a diminutive pair of tongs with which he picks up embers from the fire to light his pipe ; while the pipe itself, when not in use—and this is seldom—reposes in the folds of his tunic. Detchanski's *café*—for this is his name—is situated on the second floor of one of the queer and ancient double shops, that, like dolls' houses, lie open for inspection and air all the way down the front. A rickety, wooden staircase leads up to the wide balcony encircling the building, and to the big room whose gaunt, white-washed walls are hung with brilliantly-coloured carpets and straw matting. Here, at tables about two feet high, seated on the floor, or on stools, one can find rest and pleasant shade, as well as an unlimited supply of coffee, *raki*, lemonade, fresh fruit, cakes and cigarettes for the expenditure of next to nothing ; and gaze one's fill through the geranium and vine creepers of the balustrade at the motley, many-hued crowd thronging the pavements beneath. There is only one incongruous thing in Detchanski's *café*—a consequential clock, a German clock with an ugly, china countenance. It ticks the minutes out with characteristic precision, and its broad, flat hands just now point to twenty minutes before the hour arranged for the passing of the Imperial procession. From the direction of the new city, the Austrian Sarajevo, from the opposite side of the gulf that divides race from race, Slav from Teuton, comes the harsh blare of military bands, and the call of bugles. But over there in the old Slavonic city there are still no signs of excitement, nor anything at all to show the temper and sentiments of the people. Nothing occurs to break the monotony of everyday life and business. Detchanski serves the coffee himself, as is his wont. He places the brass tray on the table where the green, lilac and indigo shadows fall deepest ; he arranges the tiny cups and the little coffee-pot of beaten brass, inlaid with a curious Byzantine pattern of black and gold enamel, fetches the pink, sugared biscuits, and, when all is in readiness, he strokes his beard and remarks casually, " It is almost the hour for the Archduke to leave the *Rathhaus*." Then, relapsing into silence, he flip-flaps in his heelless slippers to the opposite corner of the verandah, extracts the *tchibouque* from his tunic, lights it with a piece of burning charcoal from the brazier, drops down upon his haunches and drifts off into the land of beatitude which lies so far beyond the ken of Western civilization, but which always

widens before the Oriental whenever, with somnolent eyes, he gazes through the blue haze of his tobacco smoke.

And existence continues its bright, easy way in the surrounding streets. The ever-shifting, ever-changing multitude come and go, men, women, veiled and unveiled, mules, ponies, buffaloes, bullocks, buzzing like bees. There goes a heavily laden peasant Christian woman of Southern Bosnia, in the full white linen chemise, fur-bordered scarlet jacket, coral and bead necklaces, hair plaited round a tasselled fez, and a gigantic sunflower stuck behind her ear. Behind her walks her husband, unencumbered, urging her to make haste. No wonder these toiling, patient women become old and wrinkled before the age of thirty. The Turkish domination brought many beautiful things to Bosnia; but also, some ugly ones, of which the contempt for the female sex is not the least.

Here comes a veiled lady grasping the hand of her small daughter whose face is still open to the public gaze. And a prettier picture it would be impossible to conceive than the child presents in her baggy little apple-green silk trousers; tiny, impudent, round, red, coin-bedecked cap, set rakishly over one ear, to which is fastened a gauzy rose veil which, as she skips along on bare pink feet, thrust into silver-spangled slippers, ripples free in the soft breeze. A minute or two later a flock of curly-horned, shaggy, golden-bronze haired goats and kids, looking as if they had gambolled right off a Greek vase or *relievo*, drift by scrabbling and grunting, and leaving in their wake the strong and disagreeable odour peculiar to their species. Behind the goats patter a score or two of sheep, both flocks driven by some herd boys wearing dark blue turbans and stone-hued tunics, tied round the waist with rope. One of the boys has a sheepskin cloak thrown over his shoulders, and walks in the centre of the kids and lambs, playing shrilly on his pipes—*fistjela*—while his companions saunter in the rear of the procession along with two or three wild-eyed dogs and a donkey who carries, in a couple of sacks slung from the saddle, any lambs or kids that have failed to keep up with the herd. As they walk these classic shepherds and goatherds eat their dinner of maize, bread and fruit—melons, strawberries and some berries that stain their merry mouths and white teeth purple. The defiance of youth and young, strong, happy life sparkles in their merry eyes, and they offer a striking contrast to the crooked, bent figure and wizened face of an old Mahommedan fanatic, possibly one of the famous howling Musselmans of Sarajevo, mentioned on an advertisement placard affixed to the *café* walls, which announces: "*Dervishes pleurent jeudi.*" For the herd boys the sun shines,

but the fanatic seeks for his sunshine in Allah's garden ! Two or three Herzegovinian women stop to chatter under the balcony. Their dress is quieter in colouring than most of the Slav costumes, and they have pale, melancholy, gentle faces, rather long and narrow, with the defective teeth common to their branch of the race. In their creamy homespun, woollen tunics, and trousers reaching half-way down their bare legs, their nun-like white veils, narrow black aprons, and raw hide opankas they seem demure beside their more brilliantly clothed kinsfolk.

It grows hotter and hotter, and the cruel sunlight beats down on the orange and scarlet awnings of the ox-carriages, filled with veiled women, and on the jolting wooden carts crammed full of peasants that rumble near the entrance to the *Čaršija*. In the simmering heat the whites and golds, purples, pinks, violets and greens blend into a dazzling whole, and renders one satiated with the feast of colour.

The military music in the Austrian street has ceased, so also have the bugle calls. There has fallen a mysterious silence. One would have fancied that even a faint echo of the Austrian welcome to the future Emperor would have reached the Slav quarter. Suddenly a queer, low-growling noise, a noise that cannot well be described, rises and grows in the distance. It comes from the vicinity of the *Rathhaus* and sounds like far-off thunder rumbling in mountain gorges. Yet it cannot be thunder, the mountain crests spring up unclouded and serene into the azure sky. Again the queer, rolling, roaring, booming noise. People stand still to listen, the ox-carts pull up, the hammers in the *Čaršija* stop beating ; two curs who have been diligently seeking for fleas in the room behind, prick their ears, hearken intently and, yelping, make a dash for the rickety stairway. Detchanski takes his pipe from between his lips, taps out the tobacco, and replaces it carefully in his tunic, and his brown fingers wander amongst the weapons in his sash. His movements are deliberate, never in his life has he experienced either excitement or a desire for speed. Then he glances through sleepy eyes at the customers, saying, " There is a very evil spirit abroad to-day. Allah forbid that ill overtake us ! "

But the horrible, rolling, rumbling noise only deepens. Crowds are surging up from the courtyards, alleys and dim recesses of the narrow, cobbled streets, and are running with heads down at full speed towards the new town. To precipitate one's self into the street takes but a few seconds, and, once the street has been reached, there is nothing for it but to go with the human tide that is making straight in the direction from which the uproar is coming. Louder and louder sounds the clamour.

No, decidedly, it is not thunder, but the howling of a mob whose numbers and anger increases every instant.

The old town is left behind, the streets become wider, the bellow of the populace rises to an ear-splitting yell—"The Archduke is dead!—the Duchess is dead!—shot—a bomb—taken to the *Konak*—he is coming—see the guards—look!"

Look—look at *what?* At a livid young-old face, at a pair of blazing, passionate, dark eyes, at a bloodstained mouth behind which the white teeth are clenched on a cigarette stump, at a slender, ill-nourished, boyish figure clad in a seedy black suit. Look—what at?—at the poor little student who had heard the *guzlar's* song last night, and who had left his youth, his friends, his games, the flowers, the music and the starlight to go down into the dark shadow.

* * * * * *

He was born with a terrible destiny to fulfil, and he fulfilled it. For all time he will be remembered as Princep, the Slav who fired the first shot in the world's Armageddon. Yet, when the God of Justice takes His seat on the Judgment Throne, and the Book is opened before Him, perchance it will appear that a greater than Princep guided the trembling childish fingers to the trigger.

* * * * * *

Two coffins lie out in the drenching rain on the platform of a small country station in Bohemia. They might be some one's lost luggage. Yet both bear the Mighty Crest of the Hapsburgs, and in the largest lies the man whom no one, except his Slav wife, loved, whom no one understood, whom not a few feared, and whom many, very many, hated. Franz Ferdinand had made some mistakes in his life, and one of these brought about his downfall. He trusted the friendship of Germany's Emperor.

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CHAPTER XVI

A NATION IN RETREAT: SERBIA'S AGONY, 1915

SCENE: Kossovo Field and a straggling, wretched little village lying a few miles from the larger village of Lipanji, on the Mitrovitza-Skoplje (Uskub) railway line.

Though it is barely three hours after noon, night is already closing in. Overhead leaden, ragged storm clouds rush hither and thither, and dancing hailstones, alternated by thick, soft, flaky snow, have fallen ceaselessly during the past two days and nights. The wind whistles and howls, driving before it such masses of frozen particles that it would seem no living creature could withstand their biting onslaught. From time to time flashes of lightning pierce a way through the swirling gloom, and long, angry rumblings of thunder echo across the awful desolation.

Between the six or seven wattle huts, with high pointing roofs of sticks and branches which comprise the village, the broad road, now a river of oily, black mud and slush, stretches away into hopeless nothingness.

And along this highway a nation is in flight—along this highway a people are hurrying to escape the grip of a relentless, always pursuing, ever gaining, never pausing, enemy. Evil auguries are in the heavens and on the earth. The invisible hosts of Hell seem to ride up upon the clouds—"to join the dark encounter in mid air." Satanic swords flash in the lightning: the fury of demons sounds in the thunder-claps.

For over eleven hellish days and nights, through the blizzard, driven before the cutting north-east wind, hundreds and thousands of forlorn, tortured, desperate, maddened peasants have drifted past, going they know not whither, except it be to a slow death from exposure and starvation in the mountains. There is no food in this village, there was no food in the last village, there is no food in any village, nor anywhere in the whole land; nor is there rest, nor is there mercy, nor is there justice, nor is there hope, nor is there help. Can it be there is no God?

Grim and awful is the spectacle, a hideous nightmare. The

lamentations of the women, the wailing of the children, the groans of the wounded are stilled. What use any longer to make moan ? In every eye is the stupid, indifferent stare of death. They trudge by on shuffling, noiseless feet, in torn sandals ; they slouch forward into the unknown—these God-forsaken, voiceless, unresisting crowds, on a never-ebbing tide of sorrow and pain. It is winter, and, probably, never again will many of them see the spring roses and gentians, the lilies and forget-me-nots blossoming on the uplands of their dear homeland. Interminable convoys of vehicles of all sorts, *stremas,* waggons, hay-carts, some drawn by clown-faced oxen, some by black buffaloes, some by horses, some by human beings ; herds of cattle, sheep and pigs, sore-hoofed and sick ; crowds of women, old men and infants ; ragged, dogged, bands of soldiers, wounded or fever smitten, the strongest of them half-dragging, half-carrying their weaker comrades, who seem to be in the last stages of exhaustion ; broken gun-carriages, hauled by staggering teams of oxen ; pack ponies, and donkeys, weighed down under sacks filled with pathetic homestead relics of the homes left behind ; haggard companies of infantry ; galloping squadrons of cavalry, their swords and their horses' flanks glistening through the murk ; Magyar and Austrian prisoners ; Red Cross carts, with their human freights of agony, all pass along beside the icy, sluggish waters of the Sitnitza. Under the sodden sacking, in these narrow, springless, wooden Red Cross waggons, huddled forms are writhing and twisting, shaking clenched fists in protest against the unbearable torture. But not a sound escapes the white lips though death would be infinitely preferable to this jolting on bare planks, over loosely strewn stones, ruts, snowdrifts, and pitfalls. Some of the less severely injured are sitting up with heads and shoulders wrapped in soiled rags, through which the blood is oozing. Those who are unhurt in their lower limbs stumble alongside, hobbling on sticks or rifles, clutching convulsively for support at the waggon shafts and wheels, their brown, swollen tongues lolling out in the thirst of fever. Walking in front of one such group are three or four British nurses and an English doctor. The motor ambulance cars of the hospital unit to which they are attached broke down days ago, on the trail. So they placed the patients in their charge on bullock-carts, and are trekking with the rest. At Lipanje it is possible that they may be able to get on board a train, but the chances are against it. Rumour declares and, apparently with truth, that all railway communications with the north have been severed. But, after all, are the cattle trucks on the trains, reeking as they do of stale blood, sweat and all abomination, in which the mutilated bodies lie close, wallowing

in their filth, much preferable to these carts, even with the execrable road, and the pitiless storm? And besides, to wait ten or twelve hours on a wretched wind-swept, open platform is no better than to keep the circulation going by movement, no matter how painful it be.

There is something awe-inspiring and commanding about these quiet Red Cross women. They seem to rise, even in their weakness and gentleness, above the surrounding misery. Their serenity amounts, indeed, to defiance—defiance of the devilish power that has brought such desolation on the world.

The Sign of their calling, the Sign of the Mighty Healer whom they serve, can be seen on their tattered uniforms, in spite of the shadows. On the wind comes the whisper, "*Sestra Engleska—Sestra Engleska.*"

One of the battered, blood-soaked rabble drops limply by the wayside, and one of the English sisters bends over him. The flickering, golden light of the lantern she carries illuminates her own and the Serbian soldier's face. And presently he finds rest with a word of thanks to her on his lips. Patient, with the patience of dumb animals, the women tramp past, their muffled heads sunk on their breasts, their scanty, drenched chemises whipping their thighs. Most of them have discarded their water-clogged footgear and are wading, through the frozen mud, which, in many places, is knee deep. They carry their babies slung in cloths or baskets on their backs, and lead the older children by the hand. Through the dusk, and under the flare of the lanterns and torches, their white garments, scarlet, richly-embroidered jackets, gaudy head coverings and necklaces glow with grotesque gaiety. The young girls assist the old. There is hardly an able-bodied man in the multitude, and mixed up in undescribable confusion with this wreckage of human life are the poor beasts. At intervals the road gets blocked, generally by the passage of troops, and the procession comes to a halt, a tangled, surging mass of living creatures, waggons, gun-carriages, the flotsam and jetsam of a broken race. Then sometimes, for a moment or two, the congested mass finds strength to express itself in yells and wailing. Those in the rear press upon those in front, and a panic ensues.

Along the route the ghastly exodus is continually swelled in numbers by other bands of fleeing people. And every step of this way to Calvary is littered with the bodies of those whose feet have already crossed, or are about to cross, the frontier of the land that they thought very far off. Countless, uncountable little splashes of brilliant, mocking colour mark the lines of the ever-widening, ever-lengthening march across the solitudes,

and each heap of bright rags means one Serb less. They lie in all kinds of postures on the banked-up snow edging the black quagmire of the trail. Some are sleeping tranquilly with tired, blue hands folded on their breasts. On their upturned faces the snowflakes are drifting as if in benediction. Others are frightfully contorted, with already swollen, discoloured features and widely-distended, unseeing eyes. Many who have succumbed to wounds are so mutilated as to be scarcely recognizable as human. The greater number of the women have gone to eternal sleep with their faces squeezed against the corpses of their little ones. Those who still breathe look in dazed, mute appeal for some to have pity on them ; but amongst those that pass they find none to have mercy, none to help. For, by now, the dead outnumber the living. The wolves howl in the surrounding darkness—they are rounding up for another night's orgy. Great flocks of ravens and vultures come winging up against the storm that carries with it the scent of death. A stone's throw back from the road a pack of homeless village dogs are rending the swollen carcase of a horse. One can hear them snarling and slobbering over their meal.

In speed lies the fugitives' only salvation, yet how can they keep life in their veins without nourishment ? The bread they brought away with them is long since finished, and to catch and cut the throat of a pig or a sheep takes overmuch time. It is easier to stave off starvation by devouring some of the dead animals that come ready to hand along the track. The enemy are hard on their heels. Every now and again in the rear, flashes of red, almost as vivid as the lightning, flame and vanish, and nearer and ever nearer sounds the booming of the guns. Serbia's peasant soldiers are falling back, but they are making their enemies pay dearly for every step they advance. Then the smaller red flashes pale before an outburst of terrific crimson flames. Huge tongues of fire burst skywards, showing up in inky contrast every object in the foreground. The enemy's advance guard are destroying the villages. Let those who can make haste. There is not a moment to lose. Closer and yet closer comes the booming of the guns.

Of the six or seven wattle huts in the little village beside the Field of Kossovo only one is still occupied by the owners.

It belongs to a family called Stankovitch. Old Stankovitch Marko and his grandson, Stankovitch Nikola, have been with the army since this last war began. Indeed, they have been with the army, save for a short, happy interval, for the last three years. Now God alone knows if they are still fighting and alive. But old Marko's wife and Nikola's young wife, Efka,

bravely keep hope in their hearts, though from fear they are never free.

Once the Stankovitch *Zadruga* had been prosperous and wealthy. A few years ago there had been more than thirty inmates behind the family *palanka*,* and abundance of food and clothing, and the lands of the Stankovitch had been well tilled and fertile. But times had changed. There had been a quarrel, and out of this quarrel a fierce "*krvna osveta*" † had arisen. It was through a dispute over the wells and pasturage it had occurred, and now amongst the children of the Starechina Stankovitch Marko there is enmity. They have all left the *palanka*, and gone their different ways with their little ones. Some fell in the war before this war, others have emigrated, and only Nikola, the eldest son of Marko's eldest son, has remained to care for his grandparents. Where the Starechina Marko once ruled over great flocks, many rich pastures and fat maize fields, to-day he can lay claim only to this mean wattle hut, a pigstye of a place, with holes in the floor and a hole in the roof for chimney. And now that both he and Nikola have been called upon to fight, Efka, the young wife, alone remains to carry on the work and find food for the grandmother and the babies. They have been urged again and again to fly, but how can this be done, seeing the old woman is ill and bedridden, and the beasts that drew their one cart have died of hunger? In none of the passing *stremas*,‡ or waggons, has there been room for an extra occupant.

* The *Zadrugas*—communal groups of houses—are enclosed within a high palisade called a *palanka*, formed of stakes, from ten to eleven feet in height, wattled together and of great strength. The *palanka* is, probably, the most ancient form of fortification known. Behind these palisades families reside in patriarchal manner, secure from robbery or wolves. But many of these communal households are breaking up. Laws have been passed which allow of the dissolving of the *Zadrugas* (which was formerly forbidden). This form of living was universal throughout Serbia so long as the economic life of the country was undeveloped. But foreign and modern ideas have done much to undermine the ancient system. Much property, once possessed by families in common, has been broken up, often resulting in disaster to individuals.

† The Serbian name for a vendetta, or blood feud, which is one of the most frequent causes of the breaking up of a *Zadruga*. In Northern Serbia these blood feuds are not carried on with such relentless fury as in the south-western districts of the country, fringing the Albanian frontier, where whole families and tribes cherish hatred against each other, sometimes on account of some absurdly trifling difference of opinion or insignificant insult. In the district in which the above scene is laid, round the Kossovo Villayet, families are frequently ruined by such blood feuds. Insults must be wiped away in blood, and the blood-stained clothing of each victim of a *krvna osveta* is preserved to incite the next of kin to seek revenge.

‡ A kind of carriage.

Instead of taking up fresh loads the carts have nearly all had to be lightened, especially those drawn by horses. They must bring along their own helpless folk, or else abandon them to the foe, the storm, the wolves. It is, therefore, useless to seek for assistance amongst the terrified fugitives. So the remnant of the family of Stankovitch await their fate in the village by Kossovo Field.

In the one windowless room where, when alive, the animals had gone share and share alike with their owners, the floor of beaten earth and cow-dung is much broken. In the centre is the fireplace, but there is no fire, and the snow comes in through the smoke-hole in the roof. All is bare. There is no bed, no table, no furniture. A single bees-wax taper gutters and sizzles on an upturned box, and by its flickering light it can be seen that the place is crowded. Heavy breathings rise on the fœtid air loathsome with the odour of blood, corruption and sour, muddy clothing. In a far corner, under a verminous goat-hair mat, is the sick old wife of Stankovitch Marko. With her face turned to the wall she lies cackling and gnawing her gnarled wrists. She has lost her reason—happily for herself—and babbles of the days when, as a girl, she and her friends sallied out at sunset on St. George's Eve to gather fresh herbs and summer flowers; and with her bony, toil-worn hands she makes as though she wove garlands for the *Kralize*.* On she chatters; again it is a long-fled St. John's Night,† and the stars shine in the purple sky, and the shepherds carry their torches round the sheepfolds, and wander up to the mountain tops to wait there for the sun to rise on the new day. And once more, in mind, she drinks the red wine with her gallant young bridegroom. "To the Glory of God"; ‡ once more she claps her first-born in her arms as the wintry wind howls down the great, hooded chimney, and hears her Marko greet the *Badgnak*. Fortunate is she above all her companions, for she lives in the happy past, and is oblivious of the terrors and miseries of the present. Huddled with her under the mat are her grandchildren, wailing for food that is not—sleeping

* The *Kralize* is the feast of Whitsuntide, when it is customary for a company of maidens to assemble at a given place. One of them personates the Standard Bearer, another the King, another the Queen Kralize, and in procession they pass through the village decked with wreaths, dancing and singing love songs. All these songs sung at the *Kralize* tell of courtship, marriage and the happiness of maternity, and the verses invariably end in the refrain—"*Leljo*"—which is the name of the ancient Slavonic Deity of Love.

† In this way the Serbian shepherds celebrate the festival.

‡ It is the custom of the Serbs to drink to the Almighty before they drink any other toast, and no one would presume to take his place at a feast before he fulfilled this obligation to the Supreme Being.

from exhaustion. Their mother moves to and fro among the other crouching forms. Near the door a soldier, who has been wounded in the knee, is trying to remove the sticky mud-stiff, gore-stiff leg bandages without starting the wound afresh. Close by his comrade sits bolt upright, motionless, silent, ashen-faced in a pool of red-blue blood. His injuries are internal, and he, too, will soon drift off into blissful unconsciousness. A shudder passes over him and his companion stops unwinding his bandages, pulls off his coat, and throws it around the shoulders of the dying man. A heap of manure about four feet high is stacked against the wall facing the entrance. It was after the firewood had been consumed, and there was no prospect of getting more, that Efka had carried in the dung from before the hut and piled it along the wall of the room. Two old men and a boy are sitting in it, sunk up to their middles in the gurgling filth. The dung is warm and clinging, and serves to keep out the piercing draught. Rocking herself backwards and forwards in utter abandonment, a young woman, almost a child, is whimpering the story of her own dishonouring, living through it again and again. She fell into Austro-German clutches in the north some weeks before, and was kept until the last ruffian in the company had satisfied his lust on her, and then she had been hunted into the wilderness. With difficulty she managed to join a band of refugees, and eventually, they had come on to the main trail. But the barbarities to which she had been subjected, followed by the weary march and lack of food, brought on fever, and now she also is dying, moaning as she tears her soft, round cheeks with her nails, crying aloud her shame. Cuddling a new-born baby at her dry breast is another woman. She grinds her white teeth together in anguish. A stray fragment of a shell has lacerated her shoulder from ear to scapula, and through neglect the wound has festered. Efka, with kind, ignorant fingers is doing her best to cleanse the mangled, angry flesh, but is only adding torture to torture by the application of the favourite native lotion of raw *rakia*, pine resin and salt. There is only one face in all this company of misery which still preserves an expression of intelligence and placidity. Amid this ring of agonized, imbecile, fear-disturbed, hate-enfrenzied countenances, there is only one which retains its human attributes.

It is the face of a blind *guslar*.* He came to where he is along with the refugees from the neighbourhood of Leskovatz, but, owing to his blindness, he had been separated from his friends,

* A Serbian bard, or minstrel, is called a *guslar*. They are nearly always blind.

and, not knowing the road, had stumbled from one snowdrift to another until, worn out, starved, with frost-bitten feet he had been guided to this hut. The glimmering flame of the taper quivers on his long, white hair, on his stained, silver-braided jacket, white breeches and clumsy, woollen leggings. His benumbed fingers feel their way lovingly along the strings of his little *guslé*. He lifts the bow, and very softly commences to chant the ancient Lament *—

> " Flying came a pair of coal black ravens—
> Far away from the broad field of slaughter,
> Far away from the high, white fortress ;
> Bloody were their beaks unto the eyelids,
> Bloody were their talons to the ankles ;
> And they flew along the fertile valleys,
> Waded——"

As the sound of the chanting wails into the night and is carried by the wind to the ears of the passers-by they make the sign of the Cross and set their teeth. One of the wounded, a man of about fifty, a frontier guardsman of the 3rd Ban, struggles to his knees in a swaying ambulance cart, and with his bandaged hand points westwards : " Hark ye—if God permit,† neither the Germans, nor the Austrians, nor the Magyars, nor the Turks, nor all the devils of hell can conquer us. Though they cover Kossovo-Polje and all our country as thick as lice, yet shall we return from the mountains yonder to slay them ! . . . "

Morning comes : a bleak morning, scarcely less dark than was the night. Of the little village by the edge of Kossovo Field nothing remains save a few smouldering, blackened stumps and a heap of black, wet ashes. Frost has set in, and the puddles round

* There is nothing strange to those who know the Serbs in the fact that the *guslar* chanted his ballad in the midst of such tragedy. The Serbs sing even in the face of death. And it is through the " Heroic " songs, such as this minstrel sings, that the nation's history and spirit have been kept alive through five centuries of oppression, bloodshed and misery. Whether happy or unhappy, in danger or out of danger, at work or at play the Serbs make music ; and the same may be said of all the Southern Slavs—especially the Croatians, who are one with the Serbs.

† The Serbs firmly believe that everything has origin in God. They seldom begin a task without calling upon the Deity. And they regard it as a sin and a temptation to bad luck to make a vow without the proviso —" If God permit." As the historian Ranke says : " Their very language has conformed itself to this feeling " (of the overruling of the Almighty) " and one remarkable ellipsis may be mentioned. They do not say to a traveller, ' Whither are you going ? ' not ' Whither are you going, if it please God ? ' but simply, ' If it please God,' omitting altogether the actual question."

the ruins are crusted with ice. Break the ice and it blushes red—it is sullen, frozen blood. Half-concealed under the ashes and the snow are the dead. Most of them are only little charred piles of bones and rags. In very few of these remains is it possible to recognize a human likeness. Behind an over-turned ox-waggon is a form completely headless. It wears a stained, scarlet, silver-braided jacket. The stiff, cold fingers are clenched upon a *guslé*. A lurching cur dog is crunching *something* under a hand-cart. Between the limitless, mist-wrapped plain and those who can still endure the suffering of seeing is a tree. A heavy object in a sack hangs from one of its branches, and near by a vulture is whetting his beak. Underneath the tree a camp fire has lately burned itself out. Soldiers have bivouacked here, for a knapsack, some lumps of raw horseflesh, empty beef and sardine tins, and a pack of cards are littered about. The invading soldiers have come and gone. And in their wake they have left the usual evidences of their "*Kultur*."

* * * * * *

The extraordinary, and for a time, effectual stand which the Serbians made against the Central European armies has in it all the features of the ancient wars of Freedom, and shows to an admiring and pitying world "the might that slumbers in the peasants' arms." It displays the supreme and noble resistance that can and does exist among a gallant people destitute of everything except their natural gallantry. It proves that the feeblest, if determined to defend their liberties and homes and national rights, may struggle against the most colossal odds and still retain honour, if not life.

These simple Serbian peasants were contented with their lot, happy when allowed to dwell undisturbed in their own land. They bore ill will to none. They envied none. But to fulfil the purpose of a dominant and alien people it was necessary to hunt them down, to break their spirit. "Civilization" sent its licentious, brutal forces of "frightfulness" to wreak upon them unspeakable atrocities, to perpetrate upon them all the horrors of carnage and lust. Hunted, famished, tortured, murdered, their corpses are left unburied to manure the land which they loved so well, the land which their unceasing toil made to blossom as the rose. They rot here on their devastated fields and hillsides. But better this they think than degradation and slavery under the Teutonic yoke.

The Serbians are, and have ever struggled to be, a free people. They have learned what freedom is in the school of war. They have seen the liberties of their kinsmen torn away by the Powers whose shadows fall threateningly across their own country. They

know what "liberty" means in Bosnia, in Croatia, in Slavonia, in Bohemia, in Poland, in every country where the Slav has come under the heel of the Teuton. They desire not the peace brought by the drill sergeant of "civilization"—that tramples on all individualism and national freedom—that grinds the souls of the people and destroys their liberties in the name of progress.

CHAPTER XVII

FROM A HILL IN BOSNIA: AUTUMN, 1915

THERE is a hill in Bosnia which is called Mount Stephen. It lies half-way between Avtovac and Biléc, and in the forts of Mount Stephen the "*Grenzjaeger*" (Frontier Guards), an Austrian Landsturm Regiment composed principally of Magyars, are encamped. At the foot of this hill, some distance from the forts, lies all that is left of the little hamlet of Ključ. It may be taken as the representative of every other village throughout Bosnia to-day. Allah has not deemed it expedient to destroy the evil spirit that the *café* keeper, Detchanski, spoke of when, on the twenty-eighth of June, 1914, he heard the sinister rumblings of the present awful conflict echoing through the streets of Sarajevo. Rather has the All Wise permitted this malignant spirit to destroy the weak and the innocent. Truly His path is through dark waters, and His ways past finding out! Time alone will reveal the mysterious workings of His Plan. Meanwhile, it is hard, very hard for mortal intelligence to comprehend why this God, whose Name and chiefest attribute is Love, should permit the forces of Hate incarnate to ride roughshod over the Slav races who, whether they worship Him as Allah, or as the Crucified One, have ever faithfully and humbly adored Him.

Stand for a while on the lonely slopes of Mount Stephen and gaze at what little more than a year and "*Kultur*" have wrought.

Although autumn, the weather is still extremely hot, with the oppressive heat so frequently experienced here, before the first cold sets in. The altitude is high, yet the air is close and suffocating, and into the nostrils and throat comes the haunting, indescribable, unforgettable odour of corruption—the odour emanating from innumerable corpses far gone in decay. Every square foot of the hillside is reeking with death. The seared uplands have become one vast ghastly graveyard, and the brushwood has been burned, apparently to prevent any surprise attack. Hither, day by day, for weeks past, long trains of creaking, whining, bullock and buffalo waggons, driven by doomed and living skeletons, have brought their terrible consignments, their

heaped-up, confused masses of what had only a brief time ago been thinking, breathing humanity. Here, they have thrown these relics of mankind, like filthy refuse, into trenches so shallow that limbs, and heads of bodies protrude from the soil, and remain visible until either decomposition or the vultures and ravens have done with them. Many have been buried alive. When a victim of cholera has passed the first stage of the pestilence, the stage of collapse that is preceded by agonizing convulsions and spasms, when his face falls in and his complexion turns to a livid greyness, then to purple and finally to the blackness that denotes mortification, when the sweat breaks out and the extremities shrivel, then it is considered advisable to cut short the unhappy sufferer's existence by hurling him into the death-pit, and so silence all his cries for mercy, to hide the pleading of his gazing eyes in the choking, wet darkness of the grave !

Look along the rough track, the so-called road, that winds from Ključ to these pits of corruption on Mount Stephen. The way is short, but along it can be found every horror that the mind, even the mind grown accustomed to the crimes of Central European warfare, can imagine. It was one of the many hill tracks taken by the villagers and countryfolk when they fled in terror, before the fury of their advancing conquerors, to seek refuge in the land of their still free kinsmen, the Montenegrins. To the right and left of this road stand the blackened and dreadful walls of destroyed farmsteads. They are not ruins, they are infinitely worse than ruins, for time has not been responsible for their destruction, nor has artillery laid them low. They have been deliberately destroyed according to the policy and rules that govern this war of civilization and Kultur—to impress upon the Slav dogs " the might and power of their masters." *

Across the sultry stagnant landscape, the angry sun, wearied of its long five or six months of unbroken brilliancy, is beating down in merciless splendour. Against a hard blue sky volumes of smoke are rising from the cluster of broken homes. Follow the track to the spot where the smoke is thickest and note carefully what Germany keeps in store for those who differ from her in race and thought. See what Austria metes out to the country which was annexed to enjoy the blessing of the Hapsburg rule. The people who lived here were simple, ignorant peasants, absolutely incapable both mentally, physically and financially, of rendering aid to their fellow Slavs across the frontier, which is the accusation Germany brought against them.† That they were

* See the *Neue Freie Presse*, December 11th, 1915.
† *Neue Freie Presse*, December 11th, 1915.

Slavs, and cherished in their hearts a deep-seated pride of race, cannot, of course, be denied; but was this a crime? Not a sound breaks the stillness except it be an occasional crash caused by the collapse of a smouldering roof or wall. Not a note of a bird, nor a tinkle of a cow-bell, nor the stir of a leaf disturbs the grim silence. A great bald-headed, red-beaked vulture that has been hopping in and out amongst the wreckage of broken carts, and the swollen, fly-infested carcasses of ponies, donkeys, and bullocks, makes an effort to get on the wing, but finds considerable difficulty in doing so owing to the fact that it has dined only too well. Not a few of the wretched beasts are still writhing, still panting with hard-drawn breath, and the carrion birds have already torn their flesh. With the dumb, questioning patience of their kind, they lift their eyes, asking why such things should be; why, in the name of all the gods and all the devils, barbarity so diabolical should be allowed!

Again and again from the dying tortured human beings, who lie huddled in every direction and in every posture, goes up the cry of Allah! Allah! uttered in the half-chanting tone used by the Mahommedans when addressing the Deity; and feeble hands, soon to be for ever quiet, are lifted in the strange Oriental attitude which indicates that the departing spirit is eagerly awaiting the signal of the Eternal which will set them free from their agony. Where the sufferers have the strength they are endeavouring to keep their faces turned towards the sun; and if they live till it sets, and if Allah lends them aid, they will watch the west turn crimson and the great red orb drop behind the mountains. They like to die at sundown these people. Perhaps they fancy that the light of the world will bear their souls in a cloud of glory to the rose gardens of Paradise. It is now only three o'clock in the afternoon, and those who are to pass away with the last sunbeam have long to wait.

Let us picture this village before death and destruction came.

Wild cherry, fig, walnut and acacia trees had hidden it from the road, for, in Bosnia, the terror that stalketh at noontide has never been altogether banished, and the habitations of men have for centuries been carefully concealed from observation by small plantations. At the entrance to the hamlet there was a water-trough, shaded by plum-trees and willows, where men and beasts slaked their thirst. The hollowed-out wooden tube where these had drunk, and the big stone basin where the villagers filled their *iestjas*, are still here, but both are now polluted and stained, and the once sparkling stream that trickles to the road is making a rosy pool round the mutilated body of a dead child, lying face downwards in the way. Close by the fountain stood a granary,

a queer erection made of closely interwoven osiers, that looked for all the world like a huge open wicker clothes basket set on four poles. Beyond this granary there were some gardens where flowers and vegetables flourished, sheltered from the fierce heat and blighting spring winds by a high palisade covered with trailing greenery.

A stone's throw from these gardens the guard-house, or *Gendarmerie Post*—the only tolerable place where Europeans of refined habits could pass a night—afforded a shelter alongside the village *han*, whose proprietor, a tattered old Musselman, had always such a genial "*hobar dan*," * with which to welcome his guests, and coffee as excellent as any to be found in the country. Close by was a third primitive hostel, the *gostiona* or *Kafana*, for the accommodation of Christian native wayfarers; and at the entrance to the main street there was a pretty little house, built after the style of all Bosnian residences, with a wide-stretching roof and the usual cool, flower-gay verandah. Then there was the old priest, the local *pap*, beloved alike by Christians and Mahommedans. He sits on the balcony looking out over his little kingdom with wise, gentle, twinkling eyes, dressed in a long black tunic, that reaches to the heels, a purple silken sash, and a high black hat. As the children troop out from the tumble-down, whitewashed building, glorified by the name of "school," he smiles and waves his hand to them, while they, in their turn, respond with shrill shouts of "*Papa!*" "*Papa!*" and much throwing of kisses. He is the "Papa" of everybody, both good and bad. He has no fixed income, and subsists solely on what his flock see fit to bestow on him. Men chatter to him of their crops, the women of their sick children, of their unruly husbands, of the extortions of the tax-collectors, of the condition of the herds, and he answers merrily to questions at every breathing space. Their hard lives are his life. Like them he tills the fields given to him by his parishioners, and lives on what produce he can take from them. No one can handle a flail better than he and no one can compete with the *pap* in the knowledge of healing herbs. But the only halo which he permits his congregation to see round his head is the blue smoke of his long pipe, and his sermons are, as a rule, interlarded with the broadest jests.

But all this has vanished. Kultur, with death and destruction in the van, has come and we are now faced with the awful results of war. Of the *pap's* pretty home, saving a few feet of battered wall, not one stone has been left upon the other. The house, barns, and fowl-houses, are nothing but a heap of smouldering

* Good Day!

cinders. Evidently some inflammable matter has been used to accelerate the destruction, and the fire has hurried along the ground, licking up cultivation, garden, hedges and fruit trees. Only the wall stands erect, bearing innumerable traces of bullets, and at its foot black clots of blood are drying on charred, scorched débris, on torn mattresses, broken crockery, smashed furniture.

Farther on along the narrow main street, where the quaint dwellings had clung one to the other, each overlapping roof overreaching the next, where all had been so clean and white, so cheerful under blossoming flowers and vines, desolation reigns. Every home has been destroyed, every hearth has been robbed and desecrated. Some of the buildings are but dying bonfires, without shape or form; others, like that of the "*pap*," have been left with two or three smoke-blackened walls, and these also are splattered with human gore and bullet marks. At intervals one trips over grilled bones of animals, and the carbonized remains of the villagers. Two bodies in particular chill the heart. They lie across the centre of the street. One is that of an elderly man, wearing the national dress. His turban has fallen off in his struggle for life, he lies in a pool of blood, his skull has been beaten in and one of his eye-balls hangs out upon his cheek. With her head on the dead man's breast is a young woman. Not a rag of clothing has been left on her beautiful body, which is slashed with purple weals as if by a whip. A handkerchief has been rammed down her throat, her mouth is gagged with a filthy strip of linen, and her arms are tightly bound with rope. No need to speculate on what had been her fate, the only matter for query is the presence of her fellow patriot. Did he die fighting for her honour?

The village of *Čaršija* has also been wiped out. Where in booths and shanties the peasant craftsmen and traders had toiled; where the bright velvet and silk embroideries, the spangled gauzes, silver filigree work, the brilliant carpets and piles of glowing fruits and flowers once gladdened the eye, there can now be found only horror piled on horror. Where the little, broken-kneed ponies once trotted, weighed down with loads so immense that nothing but the heads and hoofs of the bearers were left visible; where the long-backed oxen, the big-horned buffaloes and mild-eyed bullocks once stood under the shade of the acacia trees, where the sheep and golden-brown goats once were seen, there is now not a quiver of life. Where are now the veiled women who, in fantastic clothing, with faces concealed by black and gold travelling masks of wire, were wont to descend upon the bazaar from the distant cliff villages, seated astride of their donkeys or ponies, with a naked baby or two on the saddle before

them ; while their husbands led the beasts in front ? Where have all these modern editions of the Flight into Egypt gone ?

In the centre of the *Čaršija* had stood the wooden mosque with its crude and gaudy decorations of fruit and flowers, with its minaret painted red, yellow and green, on which, from a little gallery, the Muezzin called at twilight to the faithful to remember that "God is above all, and all-powerful, and there is no other God than He, the Just One!" * But the mosque, too, is a ruin, and the pigeons and doves which bred and cooed in its nooks and crannies, have all taken wing. Though unknown to the outer world, Ključ had been a meeting-place of many creeds and peoples. Albanians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins and Dalmatians had conversed together in its dusty byways and smoked their pipes of peace in its poor hostels, which, guiltless of beds or bedding, or furniture of any sort, offered only a nude floor, and a smoky stove, to sojourners. Many races and many faiths were represented in that Bosnian town those last days of peace. Shepherds, clothed after the fashion of their forerunner, St. John, in a scanty tunic of woven hair, with a rag wound turban-fashion round the head, had driven in their great herds from the pasturage ; and the dust raised by a thousand hoofs had followed them in a golden cloud. Jewish merchants wrapped in flowing, fur-bordered *Kaftans*, their yellow faces fringed by long, pointed beards, drove bargains with the equally dignified, equally shrewd, but more indolent Musselman traders who squatted cross-legged before the doors of their open shops. Golden-haired Slovenes, Tsiganes dark as Hindus, thrifty Tzintzars, came and went and exchanged salutations. Round the walls of the mosque at midday the sons of the Prophet had collected to tell their beads and wail aloud lengthy passages from the Koran, not one word of the language of which they could understand. But at the close of each verse they reverently waved and inclined their heads, signifying their approval of the creed they were proclaiming in a tongue they did not comprehend. What do doctrines matter to them now that they have passed to a creedless land where truth is made manifest ? The mosque, like all else, is now dust and ashes. So is the *pap's* unpretentious, zinc-roofed, square-doored place of worship that crouched, as do all churches of the Eastern Faith, under the scornful protection of Islâm.

All have gone, all have been utterly destroyed and left desolate.

The short afternoon is drawing to a close. The mighty crests

* The twilight prayer named *Aksham*.

of the snow-crowned mountains flame crimson as if in shame. Long angry bars of light stretch across the dreadful death-pits on the hill slope, and strike far down into the valley below, turning the blackness of the ruins and the vast grey fields to the redness of blood; of the blood which, for centuries upon centuries, has drenched this beautiful, fertile, unhappy country. Crows and vultures are flying out of the north-east, their gloomy wings sweeping against the glare of the sunset. Some wild dogs have crept out of the wilderness and are snarling and rending the distended body of a buffalo. The dying folk, who have waited so patiently for the sun to light them on their last journey into the night, have gone on their way, their moanings have ceased. It is still, very still, with the quietness that portends a storm. Nature seems stricken to silence when suddenly a shrill bugle call from the forts half-way up the mountain brings forth a long file of blue-coated soldiers, armed with picks and spades. They move down towards what is left of Ključ. They have come to bury the dead—and those who still live; for the pestilence, they have good reason to know, respects neither race nor creed, and strikes alike at conquerors and conquered. Watch these Magyars as they pass. Note their sombre, regular faces, their sleepy, cruel, stealthy eyes. They are every whit as merciless as their masters, the Teutons; and what they have done to Bosnia, under German tutorage, has been conscientiously and intelligently accomplished.

Night falls, and the blue-black rain-clouds that have been mobilizing in the west burst in torrential fury over the dreary land. The last feeble spark sizzles out and the last tottering wall comes crashing down before the hurricane. The wind howls and screams as if in agony. But those who sleep beneath the ashes and on the breasts of the mountain, sleep well.

* * * * * *

What has Bosnia done to deserve such treatment? The answer is best given by the rulers themselves: "The Bosnians are Slavs," says the *Neue Freie Presse*, "and, as such, offer a secret and ever-present menace to the safety of our troops. Between Mount Stephen and Korito, which lies beyond it, the road leads through the most dangerous part of the country. These paths in the hills, we are informed, had been used by the Montenegrins when they came to distribute bombs. Though none of our troops have ever actually encountered the enemy hereabouts, there has been good evidence that our suspicions of treachery have been well-founded and, consequently, the slaughter of the inhabitants has been righteous. Despite the desolation and destruction we cannot, therefore, bring ourselves to pity such a traitorous

population, rather must we pity our brave soldiers who are compelled to live in this horrible part of the world, and to sacrifice their precious lives because King Nicholas of Montenegro went to war for a bribe of a few million Russian roubles."

Nevertheless, "dogs" though they be in the eyes of their oppressors, they knew how to die, and the quality of their courage is reluctantly described by an officer on the Staff of the Commander of the Bosnian-Austrian forces, who has left on record that "They were promised their lives in exchange for their confession of guilt. But they preferred to be shot to justifying or clearing themselves were it only by one single word, answering to every persuasion and interrogation: 'Sir, we know very well within ourselves what we have done, or left undone, and you can do with us what you will; but against our kindred, our Slav brothers, by the aid of Allah, Who Alone is great, we will never raise our voices or our hands!'"

Nor did they, and across their torn bodies and their smoking, blood-stained homes the *Drang nach Osten* marches forward!

There are three things that they believe to be eternal—their country, their souls and their God.

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THE END

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